

**The Anti-Jacobin Novel:  
British Conservatism and the Literary  
Response to the French Revolution**

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## Abstract

Numerous novels appeared in Britain in the years after 1789 addressing the debate on the French Revolution and the ideas emanating from it. Some novels sympathising with the radical cause have received significant scholarly attention, but those which took a conservative line have so far escaped any sustained analysis. These were the anti-Jacobin novels. This thesis contains an analysis of over a hundred novels, published 1790-1815, all of which to some extent contributed to the conservative cause. Some were deliberately designed by their authors as propaganda; others simply absorbed aspects of this conservatism. Either way, these novels provide a valuable insight into the nature of British conservatism during and after the French Revolution.

My introduction having provided a survey of the research so far undertaken into the politics and fiction of the period, chapter two examines the reputation of the novel as a literary form in the late eighteenth century and the way in which conservative novelists used the novel to open up another front in the campaign against what they saw as the encroaching Revolutionary menace, thus imbuing the novel with a new respectability. Chapters three to seven analyse common themes and techniques of these novels. First I consider the anti-Jacobin novelists' depictions of revolution as a locus of unmitigated barbarity and anarchy. Second I survey the development and meaning of the umbrella term 'new philosophy' to describe the radical ideas to which the anti-Jacobins were opposed. Third I look at the frequent use of the 'vaurien' motif, that is to say a single character designed to embody Jacobinism and expose it as nothing more than the tool of self-serving villains. Fourth I investigate the novels' defence of social hierarchy, especially against levellers, the socially and economically ambitious, and (in chapter seven) against the corruption of the élite, who were also presented as providing a foothold for Jacobinism in Britain by the neglect of those duties which endowed rank and hierarchy with their *raison d'être*.

In chapter eight I assess the way in which the anti-Jacobins appropriated traditional characters, plots and themes from already existing literary traditions, and how certain elements of anti-Jacobinism themselves became established as a staples of fiction long after they had become obsolete as propaganda. And in chapter nine I consider how an anti-Jacobin orthodoxy was imposed on authors by external pressures, largely commercial in character. An appendix cataloguing the publication details and main features of each of the principal anti-Jacobin novels concludes the thesis.

## Declaration

This thesis is entirely the work of Matthew Orville Grenby, composed solely by him during the period 1992-1997.



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## Preface

Close to two hundred late eighteenth and early nineteenth century novels have been consulted for this thesis, but this survey still covers only a small fraction of the fiction produced in the period. There are, therefore, almost certainly many more anti-Jacobin novels, of varying degrees and types, which remain undetected. Finding those anti-Jacobin novels which do appear in the following pages has been essentially a three stage process. First, there are several existing works of scholarship (discussed in my introduction) which, together, have discerned between fifteen and twenty anti-Jacobin novels, and these form the foundation of this research. These 'tip-offs' sometimes occur in unlikely places: in biographies of figures who were maligned by the anti-Jacobins, perhaps, or in studies of the early Evangelical movement. Second, and in the attempt to place this survey on the basis of at least a degree of nominal comprehensiveness, I have made a thorough search of the major periodicals of the age - the *Monthly*, the *Critical* and the *Analytical Reviews*, the *British Critic* and the *Anti-Jacobin Review* - all of which contain a mixture of reviews and short notices of recently published novels, and which have proved invaluable for pointing out previously unknown conservative fictions. The latter two publications, of course, delighted in finding new anti-Jacobin novels, and so proved especially useful.

The third, and much less scientific, method of hunting anti-Jacobin novels is to track them down in the places in which they congregate - the forgotten holdings of the major research libraries - where they can be traced by means of clues in their titles, imprints or attributions. This might most properly be characterised as serendipity, but access to new CD-ROM databases of publications and library catalogues (particularly the *Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue* and the British Library and Bodleian Catalogues), with their powerful search engines, has enabled a slightly more systematic approach. Promising-looking titles can be picked out, located and read, and although many have proved to be false leads, several gems have been unearthed. Any success achieved with this method of detection must always be accompanied by a degree of frustration, however, for the more anti-Jacobin fictions one finds by chance, the stronger the suggestion that there remain many more as yet undiscovered.

This survey might have been larger than it currently is, but I have decided not to include novels translated into English even though they might contain much that is anti-Jacobin. I have, though, included one American work (Sarah Sayward Barrell Keating Wood's *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron*) as well as some novels which are no longer extant. For these I have had to rely on contemporary reviews, with their extensive quotations, for information. Where I have done this, I have endeavoured to make this clear. It should also be pointed out that I have paid more attention to the less well-known novels of the period. There is much that might usefully be said, and, in some cases, has been said, of the political orientation of the novels of Ann Radcliffe, Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Matthew Lewis, and so on, but I have opted to bring more obscure material (at least to the modern reader) to light. I have, though, normally cited modern editions of works quoted, if one exists.

In most cases, I have preserved the traditional attributions of works by anonymous authors, using the names supplied, often for no obvious reason, by the major library catalogues - unless there is evidence to the contrary. Indeed, I have spent little time investigating the authors, or supposed authors, of the novels which I consider, preferring, as will become apparent, to see the anti-Jacobin novel as a coherent genre rather than as a collection of novels by separately motivated individuals. I do treat some of the novels individually in my appendix ('Brief sketches of the principal anti-Jacobin novels', listed alphabetically by author), where I provide a short analysis of the major anti-Jacobin features of each novel, short summaries of their plots, a catalogue of any research that has been undertaken into a particular author or work, and, if requisite, a discussion of possible authorship and dating. For all of these reasons this section should be used in conjunction with the main body of the thesis if more information is required on any specific text or author.

Some of the novels under consideration in the coming chapters are of much literary merit, and do, I feel, deserve to be rescued from the varying degrees of obscurity into which they have fallen. But this thesis has not been the place to make claims for these novels as great literature, but rather to use them as a lens through which to examine the ideological fabric of British society in the decade or so on either side of 1800. Whatever their merits, it would be difficult to deny that these neglected anti-Jacobin novels do provide a valuable insight into Britain and its response to the French Revolution and the crisis which it engendered.

## 1: Introduction

I beg Pardon for being so prolix; but as I have the Subject very much at Heart, I know you will excuse this Effusion of Loyalty

- Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel* (1795?)

Between 1791 and 1805 in excess of forty explicitly conservative novels were published in Britain. Many more contained distinctly conservative elements. These were the anti-Jacobin novels, novels apparently written either entirely or in part to oppose what many supposed to be the principles upon which the French Revolution had been based. These were principles which many thought, or perhaps affected to think, had established themselves in Britain where they threatened to undermine all that was enabling Britain to flourish and thrive. Many of these novels may be thought of as propaganda. Others, however, lacking any explicit didactic intent, seem to have absorbed and recapitulated conservative sentiments as if by an involuntary reflex. But whether as propaganda or not, these texts provide a valuable insight into the society from which they emerged.

As with all cultural production, these anti-Jacobin novels were not produced in a vacuum, but represent a response to the wishes and needs of the society which surrounded them, the society which bought, borrowed, requested and read them, and from which their authors sprang. All these novels are interesting texts in themselves. When read in aggregate, however, as if they constituted one single text, they take on a greater historical significance as a very direct manifestation of the British response to the outbreak and progress of the French Revolution. Indeed, for the historian, the fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is perfectly adapted for such an exercise, for the two qualities which these novels have routinely been regarded as displaying - 'popularity and poor writing' as they have been bluntly summarised - provide a transparency in the relations between production and reception, and thus in the link between literature and the society which generates it, which is seldom available.<sup>1</sup> Their popularity, and their tendency to reproduce the familiarly conventional, endows these novels with a representativeness which entitles them to be thought of as a vital key to the understanding of British society in an age of crisis and as perhaps the most historically meaningful literary response to the French Revolution and its aftermath.

Yet cultural historians have been reluctant to investigate the popular fiction of the decade or so on either side of 1800, and the majority of the novels which form the basis of this investigation have so far escaped any sustained scholarly attention. Certainly this is at least in part due to an

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<sup>1</sup> Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Literature. A History and Guide* [London, 1977], p.149. The standard survey of the fiction of the late eighteenth century remains J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800* [London, 1932]. Her very first sentence proclaims that 'the two chief facts about the novel [in her period] are its popularity as a form of entertainment and its inferiority as a form of art' (p.1). Both of these judgements have remained largely unchallenged, that work which has been undertaken to rehabilitate individual authors generally seeking to single them out as exceptions to Tompkins' rule.

embarrassment of riches, for the 1790s produced several literary figures whose work not only overshadows that of the popular novelists in artistic terms but, because these paramount authors had few qualms about engaging directly with the political issues of the day themselves, has also provided modern scholars with a rich crop of cultural responses without the need to dig any deeper. Fairly typical, for instance, is Iain Robertson Scott's essay on 'the Literary Response to the French Revolution' which admirably deals with the work and opinions of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Blake, Southey and Hazlitt, but mentions briefly only a handful of novelists, and then only those whose fiction might be regarded as politically radical.<sup>2</sup> Other literary historians might have added Burns and Boswell, Crabbe and Clare, or Austen and Scott, but they pay just as little attention to the great mass of novelists published and popular in the 1790s and 1800s.<sup>3</sup> The reactions of all of these eminent figures undoubtedly conduce to our understanding of the period, and, in particular, the famous recantations of support and sympathy for the Revolution made by Coleridge and Wordsworth in the late 1790s do still act as fixed points of reference in the history of the response to the Revolution, but whether they are in any way typical of society as a whole is a very different question. Their readership was limited, even in an age when readership in general was rapidly expanding, and their emergence as major authors well after the 1790s cannot but be a distorting influence when assessing a society which patently did not at first take the romantic poets to its heart.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the same fixation on literary merit which has led literary critics and historians alike to concentrate on the major poets of the age, has meant also that those commentators who have sought to scrutinise the prose fiction of the period have tended to examine the way in which the French Revolution crisis was treated only by subsequent, canonised novelists, rather than by those who lived through it themselves and committed their opinions to paper as events were still progressing.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Bisset, an anti-Jacobin novelist of the deepest dye, is the only conservative novelist to feature in Scott's survey. Iain Robertson Scott, "'Things As They Are': the Literary Response to the French Revolution 1789-1815", pp.229-49 in H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815* [Basingstoke, 1989]. Typical, but still persuasive, investigations of the political convictions of the romantic poets are Iain Robertson Scott's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 'From Radicalism to Conservatism: the Politics of Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1797-1818' [University of Edinburgh, 1987], N. Roe's *Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Radical Years* [Oxford, 1988], A. S. Byatt's *Wordsworth, Coleridge and Their Time* [London, 1970], F. M. Todd's *Politics and the Poet* [London, 1957] (for Wordsworth), J. Cornwall's *Coleridge: Poet and Revolutionary, 1772-1804* [London, 1973], Geoffrey Carnall's *Robert Southey and His Age* [London, 1960], David Eastwood's 'Robert Southey and the Meanings of Patriotism', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 265-87, and Jacob Bronowski's *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* [London, 1972].

<sup>3</sup> See for example Thomas Crawford, *Boswell, Burns and the French Revolution* [Edinburgh, 1990]; A. D. Harvey, *English Poetry in a Changing Society 1780-1825* [London, 1980]; Roger Sales, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* [London, 1983]; Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries. English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* [Oxford, 1981].

<sup>4</sup> See Francis Espinasse, 'Histories of Publishing Houses - No. II: The House of Longman', *The Critic*, 20 (1860), 366-86, for an arresting appraisal of the lack of contemporary popularity of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey before c.1810.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, David Lodge, 'The French Revolution and the Condition of England: Crowds and Power in the Early Victorian Novel', pp.123-40 in Ceri Crossley and Ian Small (eds.), *The French Revolution and British Culture* [Oxford, 1989]; Fred Botting, 'Reflections of excess: *Frankenstein*, the French Revolution and monstrosity', and Angus Easson, 'From terror to terror: Dickens, Carlyle and cannibalism', pp. 26-38 and 96-111 in Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest (eds.), *Reflections of Revolution. Images of Romanticism* [London, 1993]; Andrew Sanders, "'The French are always at it' - the Impact of the French Revolution on Nineteenth Century English Literature, 1815-1870", pp.104-116 in H. T. Mason and W. Doyle (eds.), *The Impact of the French Revolution on European Consciousness* [Gloucester, 1989]; Barton R. Friedman, *Fabricating History. English Writers on the French Revolution* [Princeton, N.J., 1988].

Even recent new historicist literary criticism, although it has elevated to a degree of prominence many authors previously outside the canon and has often sought to place their work in its ideological context, has rarely sought material from the vast and largely untapped reserves of popular fiction.<sup>6</sup> Those critics who have examined novels in depth have almost always preferred to concentrate on one or two individual authors, a choice generally based on literary significance or doctrinal originality as it appears in retrospect, and therefore a process which renders the selection unrepresentative and likely to distort any understanding of exactly what literature contemporary readers valued. Thus the fiction of, amongst others, Frances Burney, Ann Radcliffe and Maria Edgeworth, of Hannah More, Mary Wollstonecraft and Charlotte Smith, may have received long overdue attention, but it has not necessarily greatly advanced the historian's understanding of the society which produced, commissioned and received such writing.<sup>7</sup>

Even less work has been attempted specifically on the political novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. J. M. S. Tompkins did devote a chapter of her seminal survey, *The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800* (1932), to the novelists of the late eighteenth century as 'Philosophers and Christians' and Earnest Baker had set aside a single chapter of his multi-volume *History of the English Novel* for 'The Novel of Doctrine' (1934), whilst Allene Gregory had already produced her *The French Revolution and the English Novel* (1915). But immediately obvious is the fact that each of these early works concentrates preponderantly on radical fiction. Baker mentions two conservative novels, compared with eight or nine radical works, and Gregory commits just one chapter to the 'Opponents of the Revolutionary Philosophers', whose fiction fills the rest of her study. Tompkins, for her part, retained a numerical parity between radical and conservative fictions, but was evidently far more captivated by the Philosophers than by the Christians.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, this was a bias

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<sup>6</sup> Much contextualising work on eighteenth century fiction has been recently forthcoming, but most of it concentrates on already canonised literature. See, for example, Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilisation: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, Calif., 1986); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York, 1987) and John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1987). The same is largely true of those works specifically dealing with more narrowly political literature in Britain in the 1790s: Kelvin Everest (ed.), *Revolution in writing. British literary responses to the French Revolution* (Milton Keynes, 1991) which contains essays on Wollstonecraft, Burke, Paine, Shelley and Hannah More; Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (eds.), *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815* (Athens, Ohio, 1986), which contains essays on the political fiction of More, Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith; Robert Hole, 'British Counter-revolutionary Popular Propaganda in the 1790s', pp.53-68 in Colin Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: conflict, subversion and propaganda* (Exeter, 1983); and Stephen Prickett, *England and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke, 1989), which does contain short sections on Smith and Frances Burney, but concentrates on the more straightforwardly political writers of the period as well as all the major romantic poets.

<sup>7</sup> Much of this work has nevertheless been extremely valuable. See, for instance, Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility. Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London, 1993); Eleanor Ty, *Unsex'd Revolutionaries. Five Women Novelists of the 1790s* (Toronto, 1993); David Durant, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Conservative Gothic', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 22 (1982), 519-30; Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford, 1993); Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney. The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1988); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer. Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago, 1984); Warren Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke, 1979); Ann H. Jones, *Ideas and Innovations. Best-Sellers of Jane Austen's Age* (New York, 1986); Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago, 1988); Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford, 1972) and *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in His Context* (London, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.296-328; Earnest Baker, *The History of the English Novel*, vol.5: *The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Novel* (London, 1934), pp.228-55; Allene Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel* (New York, 1915), passim and pp.134-60 for the anti-Jacobin novel. See also M. Ray Adams, *Studies in the Literary*



that continued to manifest itself when interest in the subject was rekindled in the mid-1970s and particularly in two works which continue to set the agenda for the literary history of the 1790s. Indeed, it is testament to the neglect endured by anti-Jacobin fiction that Marilyn Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) remains the most sustained and influential study of conservative fiction yet attempted even though she dedicates only one chapter to it and deals, however authoritatively, with only a dozen anti-Jacobin works. Just as influential has been Gary Kelly's *The English Jacobin Novel* (1976), an indispensable study but one which, by focusing on four prominent radical novelists, continued to steer any attention being paid to the popular, political literature of the age away from the conservative and back towards the circle of William Godwin and the 'English Jacobins'.<sup>9</sup>

This current work is, to an extent, a continuation of the analysis of anti-Jacobin fiction begun by Butler as an exercise in the contextualisation of Austen's novels. This undertaking now seems both valid in its own right and historically illuminating in a way that Butler was reluctant to explore. But the principal shortcoming of Butler's work remains simply that she underestimated the true extent of anti-Jacobin fiction. Whereas she detected only thirteen novels which she was prepared to designate anti-Jacobin, there are, in fact, over three times as many. Butler's was a fairly consistent underestimation: Tompkins had identified twelve anti-Jacobin novels, Gregory about the same, although her rather eccentric judgements need to be treated with a little scepticism, and A. D. Harvey, in his 1977 study of one particular anti-Revolutionary novel, found fourteen. The record probably belongs to Peter Marshall, who in 1984 identified fifteen novels attacking the subject of his biography, William Godwin.<sup>10</sup>

But a second purpose of this examination of anti-Jacobin literature must also be to respond to the claims made by Kelly and others for the primacy of Jacobin fiction, claims which inherently underrate the profusion and coherence of conservative fiction. In 1970, for instance, David McCracken, investigating Godwin's polemical fiction, asserted that the novel as a vehicle for ideas was common in the late eighteenth century but was 'usually associated with radical ideas.' Likewise, in *The English Jacobin Novel*, in his zeal to emphasise the achievements of the radical novelists, Kelly

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*Backgrounds of English Radicalism* [Lancaster, Penn., 1947], who deals with Mary Hays and Mary Robinson as radical novelists.

<sup>9</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and War of Ideas* [1975; Oxford, 1987], pp.88-123 for 'The Anti-Jacobins'; Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* [Oxford, 1976]. See also P. D. Tripathi, *The Doctrinal English Novel (Later Eighteenth Century). Middle-Class Consciousness in England During the American and French Revolutions* [Calcutta, 1977] which, amongst many novelists surveyed, deals with only two anti-Jacobins who apparently merit a single reference each.

<sup>10</sup> A. D. Harvey, 'George Walker and the Anti-Revolutionary Novel', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 28 (1977), 290-300. Harvey lists, but does not examine, six novels which he calls 'fully-fledged polemics' and eight which 'contain reflections on reform ideology' (p.292n.2). Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* [New Haven, Conn., 1984], pp.211-33. Claudia L. Johnson names eight 'unequivocally anti-Jacobin novelists' in her *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, p.7, as does Gary Kelly in his *English Fiction of the Romantic Period* [London, 1989], pp.59-64. It should not be forgotten that all of these figures are at the upper end of the range. Iain Robertson Scott, as we have seen, cites only one anti-Jacobin novel ("Things As They Are": the Literary Response to the French Revolution 1789-1815', p.237), W. L. Renwick in the relevant volume of *The Oxford History of English Literature*, cites only two novels containing anti-Jacobin elements (*The Rise of the Romantics 1789-1815. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Jane Austen* [Oxford, 1963], p.69), and other biographers of Godwin enumerate anywhere between two and eleven anti-Godwinian fictions (Ford K. Brown, *The Life of William Godwin* [London, 1926], pp.173-74, and Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason. The Life and Thought of William Godwin* [London, 1980], pp.148 and 157-59, name eleven and ten anti-Jacobin novels respectively, of which they have only six in common).

observed that 'surely few novelists, except Jacobin ones, ever hoped that their performances would conduce to the happiness of their readers by any other means than by entertaining them.'<sup>11</sup> Such statements are manifestly untrue. The facts are that anti-Jacobin novels outnumbered Jacobin fictions, and outlasted them too. Kelly initially concentrated on four Jacobin novelists but added that there were several others of less conviction and prominence. Even including these more dubious Jacobins, there were still under twenty radical novels produced, with only a very few of them appearing any later than 1796.<sup>12</sup> The forty-plus conservative novels reached a peak of production only in about 1800 and fresh works were still appearing five years later. Anti-Jacobin fiction as propaganda may not have actually won the Revolution debate itself, but it was certainly on the winning side. All that has so far proved lacking is a serious study of the extent and variety of anti-Jacobin fiction, an omission which I hope to address.

In fact, few commentators would now contend that Jacobin ideas dominated political discourse in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fiction. This is a revision brought about at least in part by the recognition that Jacobinism became more or less extinct by the end of the 1790s, but this realisation has certainly not meant that critics have sought to redress the balance by emphasising a superseding anti-Jacobin dominance. Rather, since the later 1980s, the validity of the oppositional relationship of conservative and radical fiction which Butler and Kelly presumed has been questioned. Claudia Johnson, for instance, has contended that

Most of the novels written in the 'war of ideas' are more complicated and less doctrinaire than modern commentators have represented. It does not suffice to denominate writers as 'conservative' or 'radical' according to whether they were 'for' or 'against' the French Revolution. By the mid-1790s, with France and England at war and the Revolution and Terror *faits accomplis*, there were few English 'Jacobins' around, and among professed 'anti-Jacobins', there is far more disagreement than first meets the eye.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> David McCracken, 'Godwin's Literary Theory: The Alliance Between Fiction and Political Philosophy', *Philological Quarterly*, 49 (1970), p.120; Kelly, *English Jacobin Novel*, p.116. Even when anti-Jacobin fiction did receive attention it was compared unfavourably not only with more obviously innovative radical works, but also with later satirical endeavours. R. G. Gryll, for example, assessed the work of Elizabeth Hamilton and Isaac D'Israeli, two of the most accomplished of anti-Jacobin novelists, 'only as another pacemaker to measure the distance ahead of Peacock's achievement in the next generation'. *William Godwin and His World* [London, 1953], p.145.

<sup>12</sup> There are a few omissions from the fifteen Jacobin novels Kelly lists in *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, pp.26-42. Charlotte Smith's *Desmond. A Novel* [London, 1792], with its glowing depiction of the Revolution in France; J. A. M. Jenks' [i.e. William Beckford's], *Azemia. A Novel: Containing imitations of the manner, both in prose and verse, of many of the authors of the present day; with political strictures* [London, 1798], with its somewhat whimsical odes mocking Pitt and his fellow conservatives; and Mary Anne Radcliffe's *The Female Advocate; or An Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation* [London, 1799; rpt., ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, Oxford, 1994], from its title alone (although it is essentially a fervent defence of separate gender spheres), all seem obvious candidates. But undoubtedly there remain many other works of distinctly Jacobin tendency which have yet to be brought out of obscurity. The anonymous and highly radical *The Excursion of Osman, the Son of Abdullah. Lord of the Vallies; A Political Romance: Including Some Anecdotes relative to a Great Northern Family* [Liverpool, 1792], for instance, is an oriental tale, the political allegory of which is so deliberate as to be prefaced by a key explaining that the characters 'Benevolus' and 'The Spectre' are 'T----s P---e' and 'E-----d B---e' respectively, 'The Land of Liberty', the setting for the tale, being 'F----e' (pp.ix-x).

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, p.xxi.



Certainly, this attempt to revise the notion of a heavily polarised debate is an important caveat to older assumptions and a valuable warning not to interpret novels too glibly according to their ostensible political orientation. But Johnson's appraisal is itself open to challenge and it holds true much more from a literary than an historical perspective. Some of the individual authors whom she examines are much more problematic than has previously been thought and do defy easy political stereotyping. The majority of politicised popular novelists, however, especially those of a broadly conservative orientation, manifestly did not seek, nor achieve, any degree of ideological ambiguity in their fiction, but rather attempted exactly the opposite. They thought of themselves, and were keen to promote themselves, as frank and forthright anti-Jacobins, routinely constructing their writing on the basis of their enmity towards the opposing tendency.

Moreover, if reception rather than production is taken into account when assessing fiction's political alignment then it seems much clearer that many novels were regarded as either Jacobin or anti-Jacobin when they were first produced, no matter how much modern scholars have sought to problematise their taxonomy. Not only the witch-hunting of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* or *British Critic* bears testimony to this, although their paranoid identification of exactly what was Jacobin and anti-Jacobin remains a useful indicator, but what contemporary reader responses to which we have access proclaim is the fact that an awareness and acceptance existed of two literary camps, conservative and radical. The literary pundit Hugh Murray, for example, exhibited no unease whatsoever about identifying two distinct and cogent genres of 'Philosophical romances' which had made their appearance in the years leading up to 1805. 'Some of the first,' he wrote, 'were written with the view of supporting some very ill-founded and dangerous principles' - the Jacobins - but 'of late', he continued, 'several very ingenious works have been produced, with the view of counteracting the bad effect of those above alluded to.'<sup>14</sup> In addition, many conservative novelists themselves were aware, and delighted to admit, that they were contributing to an established and coherent genre. Jane West and Elizabeth Hamilton, both of whom Claudia Johnson holds up as ideologically problematic authors, acknowledged their novels' similarity and indebtedness to earlier anti-Jacobin fictions, using their prefaces to defray what they considered possible charges of plagiarism.<sup>15</sup> Most of all, though, the way in which the anti-Jacobin novel became formularised into a convention, a process which I shall be examining in some detail, demonstrates that a coherent anti-Jacobin genre undoubtedly existed for

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<sup>14</sup> Hugh Murray, *Morality of Fiction; or, An Inquiry into the Tendency of Fictitious Narratives, with Observations on Some of the Most Eminent* [Edinburgh, 1805], pp.8-9.

<sup>15</sup> West cites Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* [London, 1796] and Sophia King's *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy* [London, 1798] as exactly parallel works whilst in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) Hamilton, whose preface pretends that the manuscript of the novel was found and sent to the publisher by one Geoffrey Jarvis, uses Jarvis to compare favourably the work he has found to 'some other recent publications, which, like it, have avowedly been written in opposition to the opinions generally known by the name of the *New Philosophy*.' Jane West, *A Tale of the Times* [London, 1799], 'Advertisement'; Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* [1800; 2nd edn., London, 1800], I, xiii. William Beckford's satirical novel *Azemia* (1798), to take just one other example, made great play of the fact that there were only a certain number of standard fictional patterns available to the novelist of the '90s: the gothic, the tale of terror, or a work of 'politics, revolutions or counter-revolutions.' Beckford, *Azemia*, I, 64.

contemporaries, a genre within which only a very few of the best works displayed any substantial degree of difference and, thence, ideological ambiguity.

Paradoxically, the challenge to the notion of a strongly polarised literary-political discourse which has been emerging in the 1980s and 1990s, a challenge which has sought to efface the division between radical and conservative, was based on a desire to detect a new radicalism in the work of these novelists, no longer a pro-revolutionary and narrowly political radicalism maybe, but a more socially conceived insurgency. Gary Kelly began, like Johnson, to downplay the disparity between Jacobin and anti-Jacobin fiction, judging both together to be engaged in the process of establishing new middle-class values which would sanction access to the privileges of the aristocracy and gentry without allowing the 'lower orders' to challenge their new-found power and prestige.<sup>16</sup> Other commentators, on the other hand, have seen in both conservative and radical writers of the era a sustained attempt to revise the limits of gender propriety. Eleanor Ty for example, has understood the anti-Jacobinism of Elizabeth Hamilton as a pretence designed to camouflage her critique of patriarchy and its abuses, and Dale Spender has made the case for Amelia Opie's anti-radical novel *Adeline Mowbray* (1804) as an admiring endorsement of Mary Wollstonecraft's challenge to the orthodox gender rôles of her age.<sup>17</sup>

That even new historicist literary critics have still by and large been seeking to identify and investigate radical authors, novelists whose work posed some kind of a challenge to the prevailing structures of society, is all the more surprising since recent historians have increasingly been turning their attention to the forms, and prevalence, of conservatism in the Britain of the 1790s and beyond. Long gone are the days when P. A. Brown could relegate the reaction to the radicalism which forms his principal concern to a solitary pair of chapters interjected into his *The French Revolution in English History* (1918), a work in which anti-Jacobinism was discussed under the heading of 'The Revolution's Secondary Effects'. Indeed, even the more measured enthusiasm of E. P. Thompson or Albert Goodwin for the radicalism of the 1790s now seems rather quaint.<sup>18</sup> At first such partisan studies were displaced by more balanced assessments of the Revolution debate, such as H. T. Dickinson's *Liberty and Property* (1977) with its equal emphasis on the ideologies of radicalism and conservatism in the

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<sup>16</sup> '[T]he Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin novel writers together represent the range of ideological attitudes of the rapidly expanding and increasingly powerful professional middle class, as that class was in the process of clarifying its own values, blending with while subverting the hegemonic gentry class, and defending its increasing power and privileges from attack from "below"'. Gary Kelly, 'Jane Austen and the English Novel of the 1790s', pp.285-306 in Schofield and Macheski (eds.), *Fetter'd or Free?*, p.292. See also Kelly's *Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827* [Oxford, 1993].

<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Ty, 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned: Elizabeth Hamilton's Parodic Novel', *Ariel. A Review of International English Literature*, 22 (1991), 111-29; Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel. 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* [London, 1986], pp.315-24. See also Kathryn Sutherland, 'Hannah More's Counter-Revolutionary Feminism', pp.27-63 in Everest (ed.), *Revolution in writing. British literary responses to the French Revolution*.

<sup>18</sup> P. A. Brown, *The French Revolution in English History* [1918; London, 1965], pp.75-99 and 163-89; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* [1963; Harmondsworth, 1968], pp.19-203; Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the age of the French Revolution* [London, 1979]. For other works which have continued to emphasise the radical dimension of late eighteenth century political culture see G. A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans Culottes: Popular Movements in France and England During the French Revolution* [London, 1968], M. Thomis and P. Holt, *Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-1848* [London, 1977], Roger Wells, *Insurrection: the British Experience, 1795-1803* [Gloucester, 1983], H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* [Oxford, 1985] and John Stevenson, 'Popular Radicalism and Popular Protest 1789-1815', pp.61-81 in Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution*.

late eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> More recently, however, it can seem as though the heirs of Burke have entirely driven the heirs of Paine from the pages of historiography. Probably the most influential work in establishing the existence of an almost hegemonic conservative ideological order present in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain has been J. C. D. Clark's *English Society* (1985), but more specifically pertinent to the to-and-fro of the Revolution debate (to the extent that it was a debate), and to the ideology of conservatism as it was received by the majority of the population, has been the work of, among many others also writing in the late 1980s and early '90s, T. P. Schofield, Gerald Newman, Linda Colley and Mark Philp, as well as Dickinson.<sup>20</sup>

This new historiographical emphasis on the conservative, however, represents something more than a mere oscillation in scholarly fashion. It is essentially a recognition that this loyalty, patriotism, and even a quite specifically-targeted anti-Jacobinism, were much more significant elements in British society - affecting more people more deeply - than any radical impulse had ever managed to become. Radicalism, it is now generally recognised, only ever appealed to a relatively small section of society, but above all was a transitory phenomenon. Those converts it did make in the early 1790s, that largely (but not exclusively) urban, sophisticated, subordinate élite which joined the corresponding societies and read Price, Paine and perhaps even Godwin, quickly - by about 1795 - returned to their former political quiescence. Partly this was because new laws - Pitt's 'terror' - compelled them to do so. Partly it was because the societies which they might once have attended

<sup>19</sup> H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property. Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* [1977; London, 1979], pp.232-318. For other balanced assessments of the Revolution crisis see the editorial discussions in A. B. Cobban (ed.), *The Debate on the French Revolution* [London, 1950] and Marilyn Butler (ed.), *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* [Cambridge, 1984] as well as Gregory Claeys, 'The French Revolution Debate and British Political Thought', *History of Political Thought*, 11 (1990), 59-80, and the analysis of the rhetoric of political debate in J. T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* [London, 1963] and Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1819* [Oxford, 1984]. See also several recent socio-political studies: Ian R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth Century Britain* [Oxford, 1984], Clive Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution on British Politics and Society', pp.31-62 in Crossley and Small (eds.), *French Revolution and British Culture*, and Ian Gilmour, *Riot, Risings and Revolution. Governance and Violence in Eighteenth-Century Britain* [1992; London, 1995], pp.391-448.

<sup>20</sup> J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832. Ideology, social structure and political practice during the ancien régime* [Cambridge, 1985], pp.42-276; Thomas Philip Schofield, 'Conservative Political Thought in Britain in Response to the French Revolution', *Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), 601-22 and 'English Conservative Thought and Opinion in Response to the French Revolution', unpublished Ph.D. thesis [University of London, 1984]; Gerald Newman, 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Suggestions Toward a General Interpretation', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1975), 385-418 and *The Rise of English Nationalism. A Cultural History 1740-1830* [London, 1987], pp.145-56 and 226-44; Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820', *Past and Present*, 102 (1984), 94-129 and *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* [1992; London, 1994], pp.195-319; Mark Philp, 'Introduction', John Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism', and David Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State in the 1790s', pp.1-17, 38-49 and 146-68 in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* [Cambridge, 1991] and Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-93', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), 42-69; H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789-1815', pp.104-25 in Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution*, 'Counter-revolution in Britain in the 1790s', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 102 (1989), 354-67, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', pp.503-33 in Eckhart Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Later Eighteenth Century* [Oxford, 1990], and *Politics of the People in Eighteenth Century Britain* [Basingstoke, 1995], pp.255-86. For more on the ideology and culture of anti-Jacobinism see also J. J. Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c.1760-1830* [Cambridge, 1993]; J. A. W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property. The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* [Kingston and Montreal, 1983], pp.164-93; Robert Hole, 'British Counter-revolutionary Popular Propaganda in the 1790s' in Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France*, and *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832* [Cambridge, 1989]; Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* [Lexington, Ky., 1983]; Alan Booth, 'Popular Loyalism and Public Violence in the North-West of England 1790-1800', *Social History*, 8 (1983), 295-313; Herbert M. Atherton, 'The British Defend their Constitution in Political Cartoons and Literature', pp.3-31 in Harry C. Payne (ed.), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, vol.II [Madison, Wis., 1982]; and Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins, 1798-1800. The Early Contributors to the 'Anti-Jacobin Review'* [Basingstoke, 1988].

were rapidly declining by the mid-'90s and because Price, Paine and Godwin were no longer publishing radical literature by 1795. Perhaps also the propaganda campaign of the early '90s (of which anti-Jacobin novels, at that time, were only a small part) had an effect. But most of all, events on the Continent turned Britons against the Revolution. The regicide, the Terror and the Edict of Fraternity (which promised French support for insurgency in Britain), all played their part in 1792-93. The military victories of the Revolutionary armies in late 1792, which proved the Revolution might survive and export itself, and the interference with British trading interests in the Low Countries which it brought, added to British misgivings. And when the National Convention declared war on Britain in January 1793, the Revolution and the Jacobinism which was supposed to animate it were not only discredited in the eyes of most Britons, but were transformed from something with which an enlightened Briton might sympathise into something deserving nothing less than the most thorough execration, from something from which many had derived a satisfying sense of *schadenfreude* into something which shattered British complacency and seemed to demand concerted opposition. The 'Revolution debate', the 'war of ideas', withered away, not because every champion of radical doctrine had been utterly converted by the logic of the conservatives, but because none of them, with just one or two exceptions, could be found who wished to defy a near unanimous and highly militant anti-Jacobinism to put forward what had suddenly become dangerously unorthodox opinions.

The important thing to recognise is that the establishment of a virtual conservative hegemony by the mid-'90s did nothing to disperse the sense of crisis in Britain. Rather, as the orators of conservatism found they had fewer and more reticent voices against which to compete they simply became more strident and bombastic. Certainly, few could compete with the grandiloquence which Burke had achieved as early as 1790 in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, but after the period of genuine debate which followed, as the followers of Burke and Paine sparred with one another - a time when the fate of the Revolution in France still hung in the balance and when the rhetoric of conservatism had become a little muted - Burke's impressive chords were struck once again with all the told-you-so triumphalism of a party which had both been vindicated and had all but vanquished its opponents.

For various reasons, it was in the interests of these vocal anti-Jacobins to maintain the spectre of the Jacobin threat even after it had been thoroughly exorcised. Partly this was because many conservatives still genuinely believed Britain to be in peril. Indeed, they were perhaps right to do so, for even after the Treason Trials (1794) had signalled the beginning in earnest of the government's clamp-down, and after the Corresponding and Constitutional Societies had organised their last mass meetings (1795), there were still lone radicals travelling the country attempting to whip up support for their cause (John Thelwall springs to mind, and tells his own story of fierce persecution by anti-Jacobins in the late '90s<sup>21</sup>), and there was still the threat of French invasion (particularly to be feared in

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<sup>21</sup> See E. P. Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', *Past and Present*, 142 (1994), 94-140. Thelwall thought himself 'proscribed and hunted - driven like a wild beast, and banished, like a contagion from society', adding, of himself, that 'He never



1798 and 1804), of naval mutiny (as occurred in 1797), and of insurrection in, if nowhere else, Ireland (as broke out in 1798). Partly also many conservatives, particularly those influenced by Evangelicalism, thought their business only half completed, for though they might have seen off the immediate threat of a French-inspired revolution, they still found Britain possessed of a brittle and attenuated social structure, riddled with corruption, which, if not quickly shored up, might collapse at any moment and achieve that which French agents, arms, and principles had thus far found impossible.

But besides the triumphalism and the genuine anxiety, there were two other important elements which sustained the sense of a 'Revolution crisis' after the real danger had subsided. First, it is impossible not to notice the sort of communal psychosis which permeated British society in the 1790s and beyond. The analogue is, of course, the astonishingly pervasive anti-communism of more recent times, and the anti-Jacobinism of the late eighteenth century is just as difficult precisely to account for. Undoubtedly it had its roots in the anti-Gallicanism and anti-Catholicism which had dominated the psycho-ideological composition of British identity for many decades. But it was also fed by propaganda of various sorts which encouraged the British public to comprehend the wholly unprecedented events in France as a catastrophe of quasi-Biblical proportions, not as a series of political incidents but as a great moral offence against virtue, nature and God. Jacobinism, although it was also much more than this (for it was also often represented as having tangible effects too, such as depriving the people of food and rendering profitable business impossible), became a dreadful synthesis of assaults on queens, killings of kings, of priests hanging from lamp-posts, streets deluged in blood, and of cannibalism, incest and unrestrained sexual license too. Jacobinism, in other words, had no set definition, and thus provided the perfect basis for the sense of crisis which developed and perpetuated itself in the 1790s and early 1800s, a crisis during which the challenge Britons felt they faced amounted to much more than the sum of its parts would have seemed if ever rationally appraised.

Secondly, though, there were numerous individuals and groups who deliberately maintained and exacerbated the idea of a Jacobin menace, using it as a stalking horse for their own, more narrowly targeted campaigns. Evangelicals like Hannah More or the members of the Eclectic Society used Jacobinism as a pretext for forcing through their vision of a moral reformation.<sup>22</sup> Contrariwise, Jacobinism could also be used as a stick to beat any and all movements for reform, of whatever complexion, and ultra-reactionaries had no hesitation in doing so. Anyone from the followers of Fox

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deserted the public - the public deserted him' (p.102). If Thompson is correct in his identification of a 'radical underground' subsisting after the repression of radicalism and seldom, although sometimes, publicly exposing itself before its reemergence in c.1810, then this would provide an additional reason for the maintenance of a watchful anti-Jacobinism during and after the late '90s. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, pp.199-203.

<sup>22</sup> See Susan Pederson, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 84-113, which contends that More's Cheap Repository Tracts (1795-98) were, despite appearances, attacks on the immorality of popular culture much more than on Tom Paine and Jacobinism. Well into the nineteenth century, the Eclectic Society regularly discussed how to 'Counteract the Designs of Infidels Against Christianity', using the supposed growth of Jacobinism as its pretext and as the justification for its own decision to use the debased form of popular literature as its means of instilling religion in the people: 'The CONTROL OF LITERATURE must be [our] second grand principle. ... the Infidels ... have [already] enlisted it on their side.' *Eclectic Notes; or, Notes of Discussions on Religious Topics at the Meetings of The Eclectic Society, London, During the Years 1798-1814*, ed. John H. Pratt [London, 1865], p.13.

and the Friends of Peace to the enemies of the slave trade or those who, like Hannah More herself, sought to establish Sunday schools, could be labelled as Jacobins, and frequently were by the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, the individuals who made up its staff, and many others of like mind. They too were able to do this because Jacobinism had no fixed meaning.

It would be impossible to propose a precise definition of Jacobinism (although I do address the question in chapter five). Contemporaries used the word frequently, and often deliberately, without any exactness, purely to stigmatise their opponents. Jacobinism was simply a label for all that conservatives found detestable within society. The truculent Thelwall, for instance, was happy for himself and his colleagues to be called Jacobins precisely because 'it is fixed upon us, as a stigma, by our enemies' - one of whom was certainly Robert Bisset whose attempt at a definition once more demonstrates this negative postulation and almost limitless scope of attack: 'Whoever is the enemy of Christianity, and natural religion, of monarchy, of order, subordination, property and justice, I call a Jacobin'. They were the enemies of every established institution Bisset could think of, in other words, and, by an easy extension, of any which he could not.<sup>23</sup> By the same token anti-Jacobinism was its opposite, undefined but still an abiding moral and political imperative which, by the middle of the 1790s, permeated almost the entirety of British society.

This opposition to Jacobinism and the Revolution manifested itself on two levels. The majority of the nation became possessed, or in most cases continued to be possessed, of a sort of residual and passive conservatism, a political acquiescence which had always been largely based on anti-Gallicanism and had no difficulty incorporating a newer anti-Jacobinism into its constitution. But second, there were those who became active anti-Jacobins. Some confined themselves to signing loyal addresses or attending loyalist demonstrations - both astonishingly common diversions - but many also joined the army, the Volunteers, or more specifically dedicated organisations such as the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers, the largest political organisation in the country at its height in 1792-93.<sup>24</sup> Clearly it is to the latter group of active conservatives that the first anti-Jacobin novelists belong. Figures such as Edward Sayer, Ann Thomas or Henry James Pye, who published strongly anti-Jacobin novels in the first half of the 1790s, were 'doing their bit', were volunteering for duty every bit as ardently as their more military-minded

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<sup>23</sup> The best Thelwall could come up with as a definition for his own Jacobinism was 'a large and comprehensive system of reform, not preffessing to be built upon the authorities and principles of the Gothic customary' - i.e. a system defined, once again, in terms of what it was not. John Thelwall, *Rights of Nature* [London, 1796], II, 32; quoted in Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p.200. Bisset in the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, I (1798), 223.

<sup>24</sup> It should not, however, be assumed that all who did so were necessarily committed anti-Jacobins. For more on these organisations, and on recruitment to them, see Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association - British Extraparliamentary Political Organization, 1769-1793* [Cambridge, Mass., 1963], pp.233-74, Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-93', *Historical Journal*, 4 (1961), 56-77, Donald E. Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93 and British Public Opinion', *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966), 179-90, as well as Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789-1815', pp.110-25 and *Politics of the People in Eighteenth Century Britain*, pp.270-86, Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism', pp.62-63, and Colley, *Britons*, pp.282-320.

comrades, believing that, as Hannah More put it in 1793, 'it is not so much the force of French bayonets, as the contamination of French principles, that ought to excite our apprehensions.'<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, it is immediately clear that anti-Jacobin novelists exactly fit the pattern that historians of conservatism have recently established for other forms of militant loyalism in the 1790s, a concurrence which, again, makes it all the more surprising that anti-Jacobin fiction has so far received so little attention. Having surveyed almost every manifestation of popular conservatism other than fiction, for instance, Harry Dickinson, has contended that,

In mounting a more sustained response to the radical challenge, the conservative defenders of the existing constitution in church and state matched every action to be taken by the radicals and usually did so on a larger and more impressive scale. In its strategy and its tactics militant loyalism copied and improved upon those adopted by its radical opponents.<sup>26</sup>

This could not more precisely apply to the anti-Jacobin novelists who not only expropriated the form of the novel from the radicals for their propagandistic purposes, but absolved themselves of all anxiety about pressing a popular form into political service by continually restating the fact that the Jacobins had villainously commandeered it first (see chapter two for examples of this rhetoric).

Similarly, Dickinson and others have pointed out that popular loyalism was independent and never under the control of the governing élite. Again, this is a characteristic which the anti-Jacobin fiction of the '90s shares. Elizabeth Hamilton may have received a pension from the King and Pye may have been Poet Laureate, but they were exceptions and, in any case, their anti-Jacobin novels were in no sense commissioned by the government.<sup>27</sup> Novels were never a form of state propaganda, and nor, in one important sense, were they propaganda at all. As Dickinson suggests, most conservative publicists 'were clearly reinforcing and tapping prejudices which already existed'.<sup>28</sup> So too were novels - not creating, nor even seeking to create, an anti-Jacobin rectitude in their readers, but writing to reinforce existing convictions. Fiction was perfectly adapted to reinforce subtly anti-Jacobin nostrums without appearing to ram them home. But moreover, as a commodity in a competitive market, they would have been unable to do anything else - unless their authors or publishers were prepared to sustain large financial losses. The small active group of anti-Jacobin novelists within the population, in other words, relied for their existence on that much more substantial residual, passive conservatism in which almost the entirety of British society was involved by about 1794-95. If propaganda, by definition, seeks to provide its receivers with something they do not already possess, so anti-Jacobin literature, since it sought no converts and relied for its existence on a market which already shared its beliefs, cannot be regarded, in the strictest sense, as propaganda.

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<sup>25</sup> Hannah More, *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, with a prefatory Address in behalf of the French Emigrant Clergy* (1793) in *The Works of Hannah More* [London, 1834], II, 406.

<sup>26</sup> H. T. Dickinson, *Politics of the People in Eighteenth Century Britain*, p.283.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Ogilvie Benger, *Memoirs of the Late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton, with a Selection from Her Correspondence, and other Unpublished Writing* [London, 1818], I, 165.

<sup>28</sup> H. T. Dickinson, *Politics and the People in Eighteenth Century Britain*, p.256.

Anti-Jacobin fiction was two things successfully merged. First it was a political campaign aiming to repulse Jacobinism. Second it was a product, requiring a market for its existence. It was able to achieve both these things at once by retailing a sort of confirmatory anti-Jacobinism, by appealing to convictions already possessed by its readers - about the evils of the Revolution and of its Jacobin ideology - and thus bolstering their conservatism and establishing a remunerative niche for itself. The fact that Jacobinism was almost extinct by the mid-'90s, therefore, gave strength to the anti-Jacobin novel rather than depriving it of its purpose, for as the threat of revolution receded anti-Jacobin fiction was able to build on the ideological unanimity of the population to expand its market and, by reaching more people, most of whom had become increasingly predisposed to accept it, to enhance its potency as an agent of conservatism.

It is when viewed in this light that anti-Jacobin fiction can best help to clarify the nature of conservatism as a whole in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Anti-Jacobin novels appeared in dribs and drabs in the early '90s. By 1794-97 a handful had materialised. But by 1798 the trickle had become something approaching a torrent, with some thirty highly conservative novels published between then and 1805, years when a French invasion seemed conceivable, but when Jacobinism and the Revolution itself were mere memories on both sides of the Channel. Anti-Jacobin novels might have had subtitles like *The Philosophy of the Day* (1802), *A Tale of the Day* (1801), or *A Tale of the Times* (1799), but in fact they were tales of times then past. Indeed, Mary Anne Burges' *The Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent*, subtitled 'in Jacobinical Times', was no less out of sync with the age it professed to concern itself with in 1822, when it reached its tenth edition, than it had been when it was originally published in 1800.<sup>29</sup>

Most obviously, by following the contours of success of anti-Jacobin fiction much is revealed about the chronology and duration of anti-Jacobinism as a whole. Anti-Jacobin novels would not have been produced in such numbers in 1800, or in 1805, if there had been no market for them. Clearly, this supports the conception of anti-Jacobinism as a phenomenon only tangentially linked to the Revolution itself or to any actual manifestation of radicalism in Britain, both of which were well past by the time the anti-Jacobin novel reached its zenith. What it also suggests, though, is that anti-Jacobinism picked up speed as the 1790s wore on, almost in an inverse proportion to the threat actually posed by Jacobinism. It was only after the Revolution debate of 1790-92 had been won by the conservatives (although really it was a victory much more beholden to events on the Continent) that anti-Jacobin novels began to be produced in any significant number, and it was only towards the end of the decade that the trickle of individual offerings became anything more historically meaningful. It is apparent that the same pattern holds true of the most militantly loyalist periodicals and non-fictional publications too, but enterprises such as the *British Critic* (1793) or the *Anti-Jacobin Review* (1797-

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<sup>29</sup> Anon., *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day. An Eastern Tale* [London, 1802]; Charles Lucas, *The Infernal Quixote. A Tale of the Day* [London, 1801]; Jane West, *A Tale of the Times* [London, 1799]; Mary Anne Burges, *The Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent, in Jacobinical Times* [London, 1800].



98), or the investigations of the 'Illuminati conspiracies' published by William Playfair, the Abbé Barruel and John Robison (1795-98), or even such exercises as the *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-98), cannot claim to be representative of the overall disposition of the British public in the same way that the novels can, for they were the work of committed, not to say fanatical, individuals who would probably have published, whatever they judged the reception of their work likely to be. The anti-Jacobin novels, however, were different. They owed their existence, at least when they are regarded as a genre and not a series of individual texts by individual authors, to a perceived desire amongst the public for such works. They required if not a guaranteed consumption, then an obvious and established appetite, before they would be able to make their appearance. This was the bottom line, however much they might also have been genuinely hopeful of encouraging the conservative orthodoxy of their readers.

Moreover, these anti-Jacobin novels enable a more detailed analysis of the conservative context within which they appeared because, not unlike a modern electoral strategist, anti-Jacobin fiction identified specific areas of strength in its campaign, concentrating on targeting the existing fears of its readers, as well as attacking Jacobinism, with arguments with which its readers already sympathised. Those areas which anti-Jacobin fiction particularly aimed at, in other words, may be regarded as the areas of particular centrality to the conservatism of the nation as it had developed during the 1790s. These were the issues which constituted the anvils upon which that all-pervasive conservatism had been forged. And these remained the subjects around which the anti-Jacobinism of the post-Jacobin era still coalesced. For these reasons they are also the areas which I shall be investigating in detail.

In fact, what emerges when anti-Jacobin novels are taken as a single, aggregate text is a surprisingly coherent strategy. Three specific fronts were opened up in their campaign. To display the Revolution in France in all its horror was one obvious technique. By the mid-'90s France's descent into anarchism and barbarity was a truth universally acknowledged, continually reinforced by the ostensibly objective reportage and the histories everyday appearing, and perfect for a little fictionalisation so as to present an incontestable argument against Jacobinism and an implicit warning about what might happen to any unhappy state which attempted to emulate the French example. A second key tactic of the novelists was to caricature the 'new philosophy' of the British radicals, to show their utopian schemes as, first, chimerical, and second, productive only of evil. The proponents of such schemes they portrayed as only out for individual gain, simply exploiting any fool thoughtless enough to fall into the ambit of the new philosophy. The novel of the late eighteenth century, with its cast of victims and quixotes, rakes and manipulators, could not have been better suited to this purpose. And thirdly, novelists could appeal directly to the fears of their overwhelmingly middle and upper class readers, possessive of their prosperity and jealous of their social standing, by exposing Jacobinism as a ruthless assault on hierarchy, status and wealth. Jacobinism was presented as nothing but the cover for

levellers, social climbers and corrupt nobles - three groups long detested by, and inimical to the interests of, the dominant socio-economic groups around which anti-Jacobinism gravitated.

These were the three principal avenues of attack of the anti-Jacobin campaign in fiction, each explored in further detail in chapters three to seven. These chapters form the main substance of my analysis of anti-Jacobin fiction and it is this thematic approach which requires that the novels be taken as a single aggregate text rather than as the well over one hundred individual novels to which I make reference. Individual novels and novelists are, however, briefly treated in the appendix which is designed for reference alongside the main thematic analysis. Before this analysis begins, however, I have sought, in chapter two, to examine the literary context in which the novels made their appearance. A picture of a deep-seated contempt for the genre will quickly emerge, and it was a context which had a direct formative effect on anti-Jacobin fiction, which, I shall argue, many authors began to produce as a means of justifying their fictional endeavours. This feeds in to what is probably the most important question surrounding the novels, a question to which I propose an answer in the final chapter: why were anti-Jacobin novels written? As will become apparent, there were clearly a number of individual, highly committed authors who produced anti-Jacobin fiction in the hope that it would nullify the threat they genuinely thought was being posed by Jacobinism, both French and British. As we shall see, many of them were writing because they thought that a new and peculiarly vulnerable readership of novels was being led into sedition and infidelity by Jacobins in Britain who, they suspected, were using novels to spread their poison to those least able to detect and despise it. But not all anti-Jacobin authors were such fanatics, and the fact that many novelists either grew into their anti-Jacobinism from a previously neutral or even radical position, or produced novels which were distinctly conservative in some important respects, but clearly lacked the motivating zeal of the more committed anti-Jacobins, suggests that anti-Jacobinism was not only an acquired trait but one which many authors were highly anxious to acquire and to display, often as prominently as possible. My opinion that anti-Jacobinism became not merely fashionable, but also something of a prerequisite for literary success, will be fully explained in chapter nine, but it is a contention that underlies all the chapters that follow. That the conventions of the anti-Jacobin novel were appropriated for the fundamentally non-political fiction of the ensuing, post-Revolutionary age, just as the conventions of mid-eighteenth century fiction had been commandeered by the anti-Jacobins themselves - a dual process which I examine in chapter eight - goes some way to demonstrating that anti-Jacobinism in fiction, though it may have started as a crude attempt at propaganda, quickly became something much more than the work of a few isolated individuals, becoming a coherent genre, imposing itself on literary production as a whole, and reflecting the values of the society which commissioned and consumed it.

## 2: The Novel Reproved and Reprieved

'It was said by Fletcher of Saltoun, "Let me make the ballads of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws." Might it not be said with as much propriety, Let me make the novels of a country, and let who will make the system?'

- Anna Lætitia Barbauld, *An Essay on the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing* (1810)

One of the reasons why the novels of Jane Austen continue to stand out from the vast seas of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fiction is that, unlike so many of her contemporaries, she does not seem to have been ashamed of what she wrote. Indeed, in *Northanger Abbey*, written around 1797, she lamented the fact that novelists were continually 'degrading, by their contemptuous censure, the very performances to the number of which they were themselves adding, joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever allowing them to be read by their own heroine'.<sup>1</sup> As ever, Austen's observation was accurate. Authors, reviewers, and even many readers of fiction, joined together in lambasting the genre in the production and reception of which they were engaged, until their disdain was all but hegemonic. And yet, of course, novels were still written and read, and in greater and greater numbers throughout the century. Austen thought this hypocrisy on the part of the authors; plenty of other commentators indicted readers for consuming fiction in private whilst deriding them in public. But these double standards were a symptom of a debate on novels, on literacy, education and reading as a whole in fact, which came to the surface in the 1790s, a debate which would culminate with the novel regaining, in the eyes of many, the sort of respectability it had not enjoyed since the golden age of Richardson and Fielding, Smollett and Sterne.

In the sections that follow, I shall be investigating why it was that novelists believed it necessary to deprecate their chosen literary form, what contemporary attitudes to reading, authorship and fiction were, and finally the nature of the relationship between these opinions and the development of the anti-Jacobin novel. One question which underlies this analysis - the question of who was actually reading novels - is fundamental but too intricate to be considered in any detail here. It has been suggested, by both contemporaries and historians, that the circle of readers consuming fiction widened considerably in the late eighteenth century, allowing new types of readers (children, women, the lower orders) to gain access, for the first time, to literature. This is a claim which should be treated with a degree of scepticism.<sup>2</sup> But

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis [1818; Harmondsworth, 1985], p.58. See, for just one example, *The Brothers* [London, 1794], a novel designed for children, whose heroine, we are told, 'had acquired a sufficient taste for the real beauties of literature to deter her from perusing the trash that is so liberally bestowed on the public, under the name of novels' (p.149).

<sup>2</sup> It has only been in recent years that the twin works of the 1950s which did so much to encourage and facilitate an examination of readership as a necessary part of eighteenth and nineteenth century literary history, Richard D. Altick's *The English Common Reader. A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* [Chicago, 1957] and R. K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848. Literacy and Social Tension* [London, 1955], have been at all usefully superseded. Even now, any new work in

whether or not the readers of fiction were really all young women, recent graduates of the Sunday schools, and just wealthy enough to afford the fees of the circulating libraries, the important fact here is that it was, for contemporaries, an article of faith that literature was indeed reaching new consumers, and that it was fiction which had pioneered these new markets.<sup>3</sup> This was, at the very least, a cause for concern, and it is this anxiety which underlies much of the literary production of the period, and the debate that went on around it. Ultimately, it was this question of who was reading novels in the age of the Revolution crisis that was to provide the impetus both for the renewed vehemence of the opponents of fiction, and for those who would seek to redeem it.

### 1 *Contesting the abuses and uses of reading*

A rhetoric of opposition to the spread of reading, and to the educational and distributive processes that seemed to facilitate it, may best be considered as a fairly constant background throughout the eighteenth century. It was a sporadic indignation which matured, logically, at more or less the same pace as the ability to read, and the availability of reading matter, appeared to trickle down through society. I am going to suggest that the sense of crisis which emerged in response to the Revolution and increased radicalism in the 1790s gave what had been a somewhat petulant resentment a new focus and coherence, but this should be taken to mean neither that this *fin de siècle* climax of opposition to education, reading

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the area must accept that there will be few new empirical findings or conclusions to be added to what has long been known. The most valuable studies that we now have tend to address the question of readership from other angles and as the necessary foundation of other agendas, and as such compliment one another more than they compete. The best are Paul Korshin (ed.), *The Widening Circle. Essays on the Circulation of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Europe* [Philadelphia, 1976], especially pp.85-115, Jon P. Klancher's *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* [Madison, Wisconsin, 1987], especially chs. 2 and 3, J. Paul Hunter's *Before Novels. The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* [New York, 1990], especially chs. 3-6, and James Raven *Judging New Wealth. Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* [Oxford, 1992], especially the 'Introduction' and chs. 1-4. Also interesting methodologically, as well as for placing the British experience in an international context, are Albert Ward, *Book Production, Fiction and the German Reading Public 1740-1800* [Oxford, 1974], especially chs. 3 and 5, Robert Winans, 'The Growth of a Novel-Reading Public in Late Eighteenth Century America', *Early American Literature*, 9 (1975), 267-75 and William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life. Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* [Knoxville, Tenn., 1989].

<sup>3</sup> Incontestably many more novels were being published in the 1790s and 1800s than had ever been the case before. The only question is whether they were being read by new readers ('the widened circle') or whether they were simply being consumed in larger numbers by those who had previously bought or borrowed books. Accurate assessment of the number of novels being produced in Britain is a difficult matter. However, any checklist we might choose to use makes it abundantly clear that there was a significant escalation in their production, beginning in the 1780s and continuing in the '90s. Leonard Orr, for instance, has observed a gradual rise in the number of novels published per decade, from 129 in 1750-59 to 153 in the 1760s and 202 in the '70s, before a more rapid escalation to 277 in the '80s and 429 in 1790-99 (Orr, *A Catalogue Checklist of English Prose Fiction, 1750-1800* [Troy, N.Y., 1979]), and James Raven has graphically illustrated this jump in his 'Figures 1-3' (*Judging New Wealth*, pp.32-34). More emphatically, a survey of the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue* on CD-ROM reveals that the number of publications in English calling themselves by the largely synonymous appellations 'novel' or 'romance', or so designated in the catalogue's description, rose steadily from 85 in 1751-60 to 112 in 1761-70 and 126 in 1771-80 before a sudden 141% increase to 304 in 1781-90 and a further doubling to 654 in the last ten years of the century. When we take into account the inevitable omissions from this trawl, these figures more or less accord with Raven's estimate that by 1800, around ninety new novels were being published each year, with a further sixty reprints of previous titles (p.31). One might suspect that even these figures are on the low side, however, since just one single (albeit the most prolific) publisher, William Lane at the Minerva Press, was consistently producing over twenty novels each year. Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press* [London, 1939 for 1935], 'Appendix II', pp.272-92.



and the production of popular literature ever took on a radically different form from its traditional manifestation, nor that there was ever a deliberate and orchestrated campaign formed to oppose the spread of literature to new sections of society.

In fact, those who lamented an expanding literary culture spent much of the later eighteenth century searching for just such a new focus for their campaign, and their attempts to seize on institutions which seemed to be inventions only of the present iniquitous age - the libraries and the Charity or Sunday schools, as well as on the novel itself - were the result. Lacking a coherent ideology of opposition to a literary competence which, especially in the tradition of anti-Catholicism, had long been regarded as a virtue to be encouraged, these institutions became symbols of all that the opponents of the expansion of the reading habit abhorred, pegs on which to hang their concerns about what a newly literate class might threaten. Even the most cursory perusal of the *Gentleman's Magazine* of the 1770s, '80s or '90s, reveals the anxieties of a 'Eusebius' or an 'Amicus' who felt it necessary to voice concern about the dangers of circulating libraries and Sunday schools. Even 'Belzebub' himself felt obliged to write to the editor in 1788 applauding in rather general terms the contribution the circulating libraries were making to the work of the Devil.<sup>4</sup> The most common complaint about the libraries was that they kept the addicts whose habit they fuelled away from their duties to their employer or their family. Numerous were the office boys and servant girls who seemingly spent their time poring over the latest volume brought from the library instead of performing their allotted tasks, and it was apparently a common sight for the readers of the *Eclectic Review* to find a mother surrounded by squalor and wretched children whose plight exhibited 'the desolating effects of the spiritous dram, and the fascination of circulating library reading.'<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps some of its enemies did genuinely believe that the effects of a circulating library were as destructive as alcoholism and as little in need of explanation. Some more astute commentators, though, do articulate what sound like more fundamental anxieties. Clara Reeve, for instance, although she was doubtless a great beneficiary of the library system, complained in her *Progress of Romance* (1785) that circulating libraries were 'a great evil,' since 'young people are allowed to subscribe to them, and to read indiscriminately all they contain'.<sup>6</sup> Where this differs from the usual vitriol of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, say, is that it makes clear any corruption caused by the libraries is at least as much to do with the people who frequent the institution as the institution itself, that it arose from the dissemination of literature to the indiscriminating, rather than from the literature itself.<sup>7</sup> Such a distinction between experienced and

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<sup>4</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 58 (1788), 391. See also, for example, the controversy over the benefits and evils of education and literacy in 67 (1797), 756, 819-20, 940-41 and 941-42.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Devendra P. Varma, *The Evergreen Tree of Diabolical Knowledge* [Washington D.C., 1972], p.75.

<sup>6</sup> Reeve, *The Progress of Romance, Through Times, Countries and Manners, with Remarks on the Good and Bad Effects of It, on them respectively* [Colchester, 1785], II, 77.

<sup>7</sup> James Barton's *bildungsroman*, *The Remorseless Assassin* [London, 1803], exemplifies this balanced attitude to libraries. The protagonist was allowed loose in a library, but read 'indiscriminately without choice' and 'consequently authors whose opinions were dangerous and seductive', whose 'false and chimerical' systems he immediately imbibed because he 'had no one who could arrange and rectify them'. Gradually experience cultivated the field of his mind, removing the thistles which the bad books had planted and

inexperienced readers - those who would be able to distinguish between the wholesome food and the poison into which literature had always been divided - offered a simple and expedient ideological rationale for opposing a literary culture without the necessity of condemning all reading, something which few Protestants, few believers in the past glories of English literature, and few who read themselves, would be prepared to do.<sup>8</sup>

Similar strategies were adopted by those who campaigned against that other innovation, and *cause célèbre*, of the eighteenth century, systematic schooling for the poor. As repeated controversies over the education of the lower orders arose in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, opponents of the schools reiterated time and again an opinion current since the early eighteenth century, that it was not education *per se* to which they were opposed, nor even the education of the poor, but that it was an education which unfitted the poor for their station in life which they repudiated. The perspective shaped by Humphry Repton, the landscape gardener, in an essay entitled 'Advantages and Evils of Sunday Schools Considered' (1788), is perhaps typical:

We are told that by diffusing the knowledge of *reading*, we shall enlarge the minds of the vulgar; I grant it, but does it necessarily follow, that the lower classes will be more *industrious*, more *virtuous*, or even more *happy*? Certainly not...<sup>9</sup>

Education, reading, even circulating libraries, were in themselves admirable, but all might become evils if their putative beneficiaries, the lower orders, were ill-equipped for their reception. 'I contend that some degree of ignorance is necessary to keep them subordinate, and to make them either useful to others, or happy in themselves', says Repton. 'What plowman who could read the renowned History of Jack Hickerthrift, of the story of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, would be content to whistle up one furrow, and down another, from the morning down to the setting of the sun?'<sup>10</sup>

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nurturing the flowers which his reading had also managed to plant. Unsupervised reading is dangerous, we are told, but not reading itself (I, 6). As early as 1728 the magistrates of Edinburgh had also recognized this, as recorded by Robert Wodrow. His pious complaints that Allan Ramsay was filling his library with all the 'villainous, profane, and obscene books' that the London presses produced, and letting them out 'for an easy price' (as little as two pence per night) even to young boys and servant women, is less significant than his record of the authorities' reaction. Reluctant to interfere, despite the protests of eminent citizens, they were only drawn into action when they were made aware of a book kept by Ramsay containing the names of all his customers. When they inspected it, they were so alarmed that they immediately sent some of their number 'to look throw [sic] some of his books.' Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences; Mostly relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians* [Edinburgh, 1843], III, 515-16.

<sup>8</sup> See Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*, whose description of attitudes to literature in late eighteenth century New England, also possessed of a deeply ingrained Protestantism and anxiety to defend the gains of a revolution, might be applicable to Britain too. In his analysis, most figures in authority supported reading as an activity amongst the whole population, viewing it as propagating the 'wisdom of the ages' to the population (this Gilmore calls the 'Conservative Intent'). Their increasingly censorious attitude to fiction derived from the realisation that novels ran counter to this intent by encouraging an independent exploration of literature, unsupervised by respected and prescriptive authors (pp.34-42).

<sup>9</sup> Humphry Repton, *Variety: A Collection of Essays* [London, 1788], p.51.

<sup>10</sup> Repton, *Variety*, pp.58-59. See Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House* [1793; Oxford, 1989, ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis with an introduction by Judith Phillips Stanton], pp.176-77, for a novelist's scorn of this attitude: Monimia, still a servant in all but name, wants to 'improve herself' with reading but her guardian will not allow it: 'Improve yourself! - Yes, truly a pretty improvement - Your chalky face and padded eyes are mighty improvements: and I'd be glad to know what good your reading does you, but to give you a hankering after what you've no right to expect? An improved lady will be above helping me, I suppose, very soon.' Even when the principle of providing the poor with free schooling had been generally conceded, after the watershed debate over Blagdon, debates on education were still dominated by this same concern. Characteristic was John Bowles' contribution to the

The danger, of course, was what these new readers would become once they had given up being ploughmen. If we accept J. Paul Hunter's sociological profile of who these new readers were likely to be, it is an easy matter to identify the very real challenge to established society that they constituted. He alights on four categories into which they were likely to fall - the young, the urban, the mobile, geographically-speaking, but also, since his fourth category is the ambitious, socially and economically mobile too, at least in terms of their aspirations.<sup>11</sup> As Repton pointedly put it, if the poor were to be allowed access to education as part of their *dignitatus humanitius*, 'it is equally cruel to deny them the use of wine, of silk-stockings, or any other comfort which opulence exclusively enjoys.'<sup>12</sup> And returning to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, we can find even more alarmist statements of the same apprehension. It is well known, fumed one of Silvanus Urban's correspondents, that Sunday school boys refuse to perform any of their household chores on the pretext that they have a lesson to learn on their return to school, but such offenses were only the beginning, he went on, for,

It will, I think, be found upon examination, that a small tincture of what is called learning generally infuses a spirit of ambition, and prompts a man to raise himself from a life of drudgery to a state of more ease and emolument. If he is disappointed in his views, and his ambition exceeds his income, he has recourse to fraud and other criminal pursuits to gratify his desires; and an ignominious execution is commonly the necessary consequence.

Furthermore, and not unconnected with the fact that he was writing in 1797, our prophet of doom had a warning of yet greater moment to deliver:

A man of no literature will seldom attempt to form insurrections, or plan an idle scheme for the reformation of the State. Conscious of his inability he will withdraw from such associations; while those who are qualified by a tincture of superficial learning, and have imbibed the pernicious doctrines of seditious writers, will be the first to excite rebellions, and convert a flourishing kingdom into a state of anarchy and confusion.<sup>13</sup>

In an age when fear of revolution dominated all else, the traditional antagonism towards education, the ensuing extension of literacy and concomitant (it was presumed) spread of reading, was galvanized into an immediate and pressing threat, no longer merely to be lamented, but actively opposed.

The reaction against Sunday schools as the Revolution crisis took hold is particularly conspicuous. The hysteria of Samuel Horsley's rhetoric, as he departs from the subject in hand (the arrival

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to-and-fro of pamphlets on the controversy surrounding Joseph Lancaster's educational system in 1806-07. Bowles cautioned the supporters of Lancaster that they should have only the 'true design of education' as their end, and make it their 'endeavour to furnish the inferior orders with such instruction both in kind and degree, and no other, as will be calculated to render them useful members of society, in the humble rank in which it has pleased Providence to place them'. Bowles, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread, Esq. M.P. in Consequence of the Unqualified Approbation Expressed by Him in the House of Commons of Mr. Lancaster's System of Education...* [London, 1807], p.1. For an indication of the extent of the controversy see D.N.B. on Joseph Lancaster.

<sup>11</sup> J. Paul Hunter *Before Novels*, pp.75-81.

<sup>12</sup> Repton, *Variety*, p.61.

<sup>13</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 67 (1797), 820. The correspondent is our old friend 'Eusebius', 'a professed enemy to every plan for the melioration of the inferior classes of mankind', according to one of his adversaries in print (*Gentleman's Magazine*, 67 [1797], 940-41), and a severe, if very conventional, critic of the novel (*Gentleman's Magazine*, 67 [1797], 911-12).

in Britain of many emigré French teachers) to give vent to his almost apocalyptic vision, is immediately apparent:

schools of much worse things than popery abound in all parts of the kingdom, - schools of jacobinical religion, and of jacobinical politics; that is to say, schools of atheism and disloyalty, - schools in the shape and disguise of charity-schools and Sunday-schools, in which the minds of the children of the very lowest orders are enlightened; that is, taught to despise religion and the laws, and all subordination.<sup>14</sup>

And that for many this represented a retreat from a position in favour of Sunday schools is even more striking. Figures who had once been their most enthusiastic proponents developed all the symptoms of a settled disquiet as the schools became, in Thomas Laqueur's words, 'suspect as strongholds of Jacobinism', a predicament they found themselves in, according to his analysis, around 1800.<sup>15</sup> This was indeed the height of the Blagdon Controversy, the most obvious manifestation of the consternation of the Established Church about the effect of educating the poor, but the tortuous progress of events in Somerset, as the schools founded by Hannah More and her associates were established and wound down, and their teachers sacked and reinstated with unfeasible frequency, is somewhat misleading.<sup>16</sup> As Laqueur has argued, the Blagdon dispute, made manifest in the two dozen or so pamphlets that the controversy generated, was one based on conflicts between different denominations, centring on the accusation that the schools were inculcating Methodism. The fact that Jacobinism was a supplementary charge levelled at the schools, though, and that in any case polemicists with no apparent complaint against either Methodism or the education of the poor, entered the fray, reveals just how completely literary culture had come to be linked with sedition and irreligion. Edmund Spencer's contribution to the pamphlet war, *Truths Respecting Mrs. Hannah More's Meeting Houses* (1802) evinces no complaint against education *per se* when it warns that the meetings of 'Fanatic Sectarists', which Hannah More apparently held annually on the anniversary of the founding of her schools, would 'terminate in jacobinical assemblies under the vaulted space of a Municipal Hall' or that 'Under the never failing pretence for religion ... rebellion and disaffection have frequently raised their grim standards; and the consequence has been ruin and desolation.'<sup>17</sup> And Francis Wollaston, in a pamphlet not strictly addressing the events at Blagdon, but a similarly controversial plan to open a Dissenting Sunday school in Chislehurst, and glorying in the name of *A country Parson's Address to his Flock, to Caution them against being misled by a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing, or receiving*

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<sup>14</sup> Samuel Horsley, 'Upon the Bill to Prevent the Increase in Papists, and to Regulate the Existing Monastic Institutions, July 10th 1800', in *The Speeches in Parliament of Samuel Horsley, Late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph* [Dundee, 1813], p.355.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability. Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture. 1780-1850* [New Haven, Conn., 1976], p.31. See also Samuel Pickering Jnr., *The Moral Tradition in English Fiction 1785-1850* [Hanover, N.H., 1976], pp.25-26, for a similar identification of this backlash against Sunday schools and the same assertion that this constituted only a 'blip' in the smooth course of their rise to respectability.

<sup>16</sup> See M. G. Jones, *Hannah More* [Cambridge, 1952], ch.8, for a summary of the events at Blagdon and a list of 23 of the publications which were forthcoming on the subject (p.172n.1).

<sup>17</sup> Edward Spencer, *Truths. Respecting Mrs. Hannah More's Meeting House, and the Conduct of Her Followers; Addressed to the Curate of Blagdon* [Bath, 1802], pp.50-51 and 70.



*Jacobin Teachers of Sedition, who intrude themselves under the Specious Pretence of Instructing Youth and Preaching Christianity* (1799), explicitly stated that it was not against Methodists, but Jacobins, that he was warning, and that it is 'the political existence of our country' for which he was primarily concerned.<sup>18</sup> The biographer of More and historian of charity schools, M. G. Jones, was surely right in asserting that 'Jacobinism split the Sunday school movement'. Laqueur's conviction that she 'grossly exaggerates the effects of the French Revolution' stems only from the knowledge that the movement would, in the nineteenth century, renew itself.<sup>19</sup>

In the conservative imagination, then, reading, though previously an ideologically neutral, or even approved, activity, had become absorbed into the Jacobin matrix by the turn of the century. Because of its formulation as simply the opposite of all that was good, Jacobinism itself did not have to do anything to draw literacy, education and reading into its orbit, for it was conservatives who cast it there, influenced as they were by the all-encompassing conspiracy theories of Barruel, Robison and Playfair, and the general sense of crisis which seemed to induce the detection of Jacobinism in all things in any way offering a challenge to the old order. The extent of such paranoia was astonishing. After *Village Politics* (1792), the authorship of which was soon discovered, and the *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont* (1793), as well as the Cheap Repository Tracts (1795-98), for instance, few could seriously have suggested that Hannah More and her associates were actively sponsoring Jacobinism.<sup>20</sup> Yet the Blagdon

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<sup>18</sup> Were this not so, he says, he would have been satisfied with giving his opinions from the pulpit. Francis Wollaston, *A country Parson's Address to his Flock, to Caution them against being misled by a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing...* [London, 1799], pp.28-30 and 6. A defence of the plans of the Union Society of Greenwich to establish their school (of which we learn that it was to teach a new three Rs, reading, writing and reverence for God, from 9.30 to 11.30 a.m. and from 2.00 to 4.00 p.m., with all necessary books purchased by the society, and a sermon after each session) was soon forthcoming (*A Letter to a Country Parson, or, Reply to the Rev. F. Wollaston's Address* [London, n.d. but 1800?]), and not only did it vigorously rebut the charges of disloyalty and sedition but cited falling attendances at Wollaston's own services as making imperative the schooling and sermons against which the rector had railed. But by the time this appeared, Wollaston seems to have retracted, or at least reconsidered, his accusations since a note appended to his shorter and more general *The Origin and Insidious Arts of Jacobinism: A Warning to the People of England...* [London, 1799] acknowledges the inaccuracies of his former pamphlet.

<sup>19</sup> M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement* [Cambridge, 1938], p.153; Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, p.66. That the threat of sedition and irreligion in the 1790s saw a retrospective attempt to cast Sunday schools as having always supported a Jacobin manifesto should not be allowed to undermine the effect the Revolution had on the movement. The *Times* in 1792, for instance, was being anachronistic, if typically fraught, when it lambasted Presbyterians for having 'sacrificed every thing, for the last twenty years, to the plan of alienating the affections of the subject as well from his King as from his Constitution. They have dispersed millions of artful books - they have established thousands of Republican schools, for the purpose of training up the rising generation to a systematic plan of overturning our present constitution' November 8, 1792; my emphasis). This is not to say, of course, that there had not been a long association between movements for the propagation of education and Dissent and, indeed, radicalism (on this see Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education, 1780-1870* [London, 1960], especially ch.1). But, every bit as much as any conservative readjustment, it was '90s radicalism's retrospective staking of a claim for education that incorporated an anti-education stance into anti-Jacobinism. Paine, for instance, was insisting that 'A nation under a well regulated government should permit none to remain uninstructed. It is monarchical and aristocratical government only that requires ignorance for its support' (*Rights of Man*, Pt.2 [1792; Harmondsworth, 1982, ed. Henry Collins], p.267).

<sup>20</sup> It would be difficult to over-emphasise the importance of the Cheap Repository Tracts in constructing a new paradigmatic means of discourse for conservatives who wished to contribute to the Revolution debate, but who, for a number of reasons, had previously felt unable so to do (although the more one considers Sarah Trimmer's *Family Magazine; or a Repository of Religious Instruction* of 1788-89, the more it seems to have been a major inspiration, not to say template for More and her co-authors). Any analysis of anti-Jacobin literature must touch upon the Tracts to some degree, but I regret that I cannot provide a fuller consideration here. Their centrality, however, is beginning to be recognised, with a surprisingly numerous number of publications dealing with various aspects of the Tracts having appeared recently. The standard descriptions of their production are G. H. Spinney, 'Cheap Repository Tracts: Hazard and Marshall Edition', *The Library*, 4th ser., 20 (1939), 295-340, Harry B. Weiss, *Hannah More's 'Cheap Repository' Tracts in America* [New York, 1946], and Jones, *Hannah More*, ch.6 and 'Appendix One'; but for more detailed

allegations clearly made the accusation. She had, after all, endowed the poor with a literary competence, dangerous since they were held to be inexperienced and precipitate enough not to be able to discern those books of appalling tendency which everyone agreed existed. In an age when 'every pen was raised in the cause of freedom and equality' and 'a new system every day broke from the groaning press', as one novelist was convinced, any attempt to broaden literature's constituency, however well intentioned, must be dangerous.<sup>21</sup> Even schools dedicated purely to the propagation of religion must become suspect: 'if a disposition for reading is *in any degree* indulged,' wrote one reluctant critic of education, 'the sublimity of the Sacred Scriptures is perhaps bartered for the effusions of some superficial or political pamphleteer.'<sup>22</sup> Even More's patron and friend, and sponsor of the Cheap Repository, Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, bewailed the uses to which the literacy which he had done so much to stimulate, was being put: 'Publications of the most impious and indecent nature have, I know, been distributed with infinite activity and industry,' he lamented, 'they have even found their way into the very bowels of the earth, among the miners of Cornwall, and the colliers of Newcastle, some of whom are said to have sold their Bibles in order to purchase *The Age of Reason*.'<sup>23</sup> In an age when Paine's quick-acting poison was reputed to have reached one in ten Britons, it was only natural to conclude that it would be better if no-one could read at all than that they should be able to read the *Rights of Man*.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, of course, Hannah More was as deeply horrified by the books readily available in the '90s to even the lowest class of readers as anyone alive. 'Vulgar and indecent penny books were always common,' she knew, but the 'speculative infidelity' which she saw 'brought down the pockets and

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appraisal see Sam Pickering, 'The Cheap Repository Tracts and the Short Story', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 12 (1975), 15-21, Robert Hole, 'British Counter-Revolutionary Popular Propaganda in the 1790s', in *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict Subversion and Propaganda*, ed. Colin Jones (Exeter, 1983), pp.53-69, Mitzi Myers, 'Hannah More's Tracts for the Times: Social Fiction and Female Ideology', in *Fetter'd or Free: British Women Novelists 1670-1815*, eds. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, Ohio, 1986), pp.264-84, Susan Pedersen, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth Century England' in *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 84-113, Kathryn Sutherland, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism' in *Revolution in writing: British literary responses to the French Revolution*, ed. Kelvin Everest (Milton Keynes, 1991), pp.27-63, Vallone Lynne, "'A Humble Spirit under Correction': Tracts, Hymns, and the Ideology of Evangelical Fiction for Children, 1780-1820", *The Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature*, 15 (1991), 72-95, Marlene Alice Hess, 'The Didactic Art of Hannah More', a summary of which appears in *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44 (1994), p.2153a, and Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-93', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), 42-69.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., *Dorothea: or, A Ray of the New Light* [London, 1801], I, 2.

<sup>22</sup> William Hamilton Reid, *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis: Including, The Origin of Modern Deism and Atheism...* [London, 1800], rpt. in *Literacy and Society*, ed. Victor E. Neuburg [London, 1971], p.32. My emphasis.

<sup>23</sup> *British Critic*, 16 (1799), 243.

<sup>24</sup> There were perhaps 1,500,000 copies of the second part of *Rights of Man* in circulation by the time of Paine's death in 1809 (*Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. P. S. Foner [New York, 1945], II, 910). Amongst a population in Britain of roughly 10.5 million and in Ireland of 5.2 million, the gross average suggests that one in every 10 people had a copy. Obviously, this sort of equation has no real validity except as a very rough indicator of the scale of the work's currency. Innumerable contributors to the *Anti-Jacobin Review* or the *British Critic*, as well as novelists such as Robert Bisset, dedicated pages to demonstrations that Paine's converts chiefly came from those who had somehow 'got hold of scraps of learning; who, having no idea of the circle of arts and sciences, of the compartments of literature, fancied that the little knowledge in their possession constituted the principle portion of human learning'. A little learning created 'a predisposition for the reception of nonsense, and especially innovating nonsense,' in which 'Tom Paine's book was wonderfully adapted for circulation.' Bisset, *Modern Literature. A Novel* [London, 1804], III, 147-48 and 156.

capacities of the poor,' she thought formed a 'new æra' of depravity in history.<sup>25</sup> It was More who, perhaps more than anyone else, was responsible for the recognition that the damage could not be undone and that the peril had somehow to be countered. In her tale, 'The Sunday School' (probably 1795), she dramatised the dangers of a literary competency, representing both the confirmed opponents of education and reading, with whose defeatist position she could empathise but not agree, and the arguments which could overcome their fears and, she fervently believed, resist the menace of what Peacock's Mr. Flosky was to call a '*reading public*, that is growing too wise for its betters'.<sup>26</sup>

First of all, More established her contempt for bad books. This was simply done by means of a chapwoman apprehended in the act of vending immoral tracts to several young girls, who are quickly convinced of the evils of such poison by Mr Simpson, the parish priest. But moreover, it is this episode that finally prevails on Farmer Hoskins, the chief parishioner of the neighbourhood and the representative of those who would oppose More at Blagdon and condemn a reading public as a revolutionary public, to subscribe to the school which Mrs Jones (More's representative in the fiction) had been trying to establish. At first, every bit as much as the conservative majority which he represented, he doggedly refused to give his support to the school, but his impotent reproaches are gradually replaced with, first, a grudging pragmatism, and then, a wholehearted faith in education and reading, simply by the power of Mrs Jones' arguments. In presenting this, More was representing in miniature a debate current throughout Britain in the later '90s. It starts with Hoskins' repetition of a common refrain:

'Of all the foolish inventions and new-fangled devices to ruin the country, that of teaching the poor to read is the very worse.' - 'And I, farmer, think that to teach good principles to the lower classes [says Mrs. Jones], is the most likely way to save the country. Now, in order to do this, we must teach them to read.' - 'Not with my consent, nor my money,' said the farmer; 'for I know it always does more harm than good.' - 'So it may,' said Mrs. Jones, 'if you only teach them to read, and then turn them adrift to find out books for themselves. There is a proneness in the heart to evil, which it is our duty to oppose, and which I see you are promoting.'<sup>27</sup>

Mrs. Jones goes on to berate Hoskins for his own choice of books, penny chapbooks with bawdy titles, and does not wonder that he should be so opposed to literacy if this is what it will be used for. Yet she recommends several sounder works, treating of the Maker of the hot sun and the showers which drive the farmer out of his fields and to his reading, and eventually the real reasons for Hoskins' obstinacy betray themselves in very familiar terms. In More's approval of these fears, and her careful rebuttal of them, we witness the reclamation of reading, and education, for the conservative cause:

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<sup>25</sup> William Roberts, *Memoirs of Hannah More* [London, 1834], II, 458.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey*, ed. Raymond Wright [Harmondsworth, 1986], p.103.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Sunday School' [London, 1795?], one of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*, repeated in *The Miscellaneous Works of Hannah More* [London, 1840], I, 102, 100. Compare Trimmer, whose aim with the *Family Magazine* was also to provide reading matter for the poor which would reassure those 'who are fearful of trusting the common people with knowledge, lest they should misapply it, and it must be owned, that the conduct of too many justifies this apprehension' (I [1788], iii-iv).



'I am afraid my own workmen will fly in my face [protests Hoskins] if once they are made scholars; and that they will think themselves too good to work.' 'Now you talk soberly, and give your reasons,' said Mrs. Jones, 'weak as they are they deserve and answer. Do you think that man, woman, or child ever did his duty the worse, only because he knew it the better? ... Now, the whole extent of learning which we intend to give to the poor, is only to enable them to read the Bible;... The knowledge of that book, and its practical influence on the heart is the best security you can have, both for the industry and obedience of your servants. Now, can you think any man will be the worse servant for being a good Christian?... Are not the duties of children, of servants, and the poor, individually and expressly set forth in the Bible?... Will your property be secured so effectually by the stocks on the green, as by teaching the boys in the school, that *for all these things God will bring them unto judgement*? Is a poor fellow who can read his Bible, so likely to sleep or to drink away his few hours of leisure, as one who *cannot* read? He may, and he often does, make a bad use of his reading; but I doubt not he would have been as bad without it; and the hours spent in learning to read will always have been among the most harmless ones of his life.'<sup>28</sup>

Convinced by this rhetoric, Hoskins subscribes a whole guinea, provides half a sheep for the school's annual feast, and takes an active interest in the school, which soon becomes full with both children and adults. The pub, the fives court, even tea visiting and Sunday gossiping decline dramatically. And needless to say, the village community flourishes in harmonious tranquillity.

Even so, More's very deliberate attempt at rehabilitating literature, literacy and education for the conservative cause was stressing only the harmlessness of reading, rather than any positive benefits. It was an exercise in damage limitation, or as she put it, an effort to find 'the middle way between the scylla of brutal ignorance and the charybdis of a literary education', and we might remember that many others, without More's minute scruples perhaps, had long been emphasising the simple innocuousness of literature.<sup>29</sup> Thomas Tegg, the notorious publisher of cheap literature, for instance, always protested his own innocence in supplying books to the common reader, asserting that reading was a 'lottery in which all the tickets are prizes' and that even the lowly 'mechanic finds his advantage in thus employing his hours of relaxation, preferably to the noisy bustle of a public-house, in which he at once wastes his time, his health, his money'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> More, 'The Sunday School', I, 101.

<sup>29</sup> Hannah More to W. W. Pepys, 1821. Roberts, *Memoirs...*, IV, 180. More stressed the 'negative' value of her work, simply proud that it was without taint, e.g. 'To teach the poor to read without providing them with *safe* books, has always seemed to me an improper measure, and this consideration induced me to enter upon the laborious undertaking of the Cheap Repository Tracts.' More to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1801. Roberts, *Memoirs...*, III, 135.

<sup>30</sup> These reasons for attending 'Tegg's Evening Sale of Books', where 'books in every department of Literature and Science may be constantly purchased at a fourth part of the usual charge' are quoted, without date, in Varma, *Evergreen Tree*, p.143. Tegg was a Scot in London, and even throughout the '90s, it seems possible that there existed a distinctly Scottish acceptance of education as a positive tool for the manufacture of social cohesion. Adam Smith had expressed this optimism in 1776, arguing that the more the mass of society were instructed, 'the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people besides are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect their superiors' (*Wealth of Nations*, ed. E. Cannon [London, 1920], II, 272-73). And a similar confidence can be detected in several Scottish anti-Jacobin novelists of the '90s. Elizabeth Hamilton, for instance, has her visiting Rajah report back from Britain that, in Scotland, girls were educated alongside boys so that 'their minds received such an odorous degree of firmness, as often enabled them to sustain with dignity, the most bitter degrees of adverse fortune' (Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* [1796; London, 1801], I, 140-41). Her greatest statement of faith

If we look at what More was actually doing, though, and not at what Mrs Jones told Farmer Hoskins she was doing, we see a slightly different programme. More's achievement was to assert the possibility that an education for the poor, and the literary competence which would result, could actually bolster a recognition and response to the threat of Jacobinism. Her 'Sunday School' tract itself, and the whole Cheap Repository scheme of which it formed a part, had an actively didactic purpose, was an attempt to use the written word as a weapon to fight Jacobinism, and an attempt to spread a sense of political urgency throughout the nation, both to the 'middle ranks' and the 'common people', into which two target groups she later divided her tracts. This is not to say that More wished for a *debate* on the Revolution as such, encouraging any actual *opinions* amongst the people, and Mark Philp has splendidly shown how both *Village Politics* and most of the Crown and Anchor tracts cleverly avoided such an outrage, but she did realise that it was the distribution of literature that, just as it had been its undoing, could make it positively useful.<sup>31</sup> When we read the key résumé of More's activities by William Roberts, her first biographer, what is striking is not merely the decision to issue conservative propaganda, but the people for whom that propaganda was, for the first time, destined:

The friends of insurrection, infidelity and vice, carried their exertions so far as to load asses with their pernicious pamphlets and to get them dropped, not only *in cottages*, and *in highways*, but *into mines and coalpits*.... When she considered the multitudes whose sole reading was limited to these vicious performances; and that the temptation was obtruded upon them *in the streets*, or invitingly *hung out upon the wall*, or *from the windows*, she thought that the evil she wished to oppose was so exceedingly diffused, as to justify her in employing such remedial methods as were likely to become effectual, both by their simplicity and brevity.... As the school of Paine had been labouring to undermine, not only religious establishments, but good government, by the alluring vehicle of novels, stories and songs, she thought it right to encounter them with their own weapons...<sup>32</sup>

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in a the education of the poor, though, is in her *Cottagers of Glenburnie* [Edinburgh, 1808] which culminates in a long disquisition of the best way to structure a village school (pp.364-92). Even Robert Bisset, also a Scot, seems fascinated by education in all its forms (even if his attitudes to popular education are more conventionally conservative), eulogizing Edinburgh High School and University, providing advice on the best methods of appointing school-teachers, and having his hero teach at a girls' boarding school and attend a meeting of a society of school-masters, where so many speak good sense that Bisset charitably estimates that only one half of teachers profess to teach that which they have never learned (*Douglas; or, the Highlander. A Novel* [London, 1800], I, 98-100, 113n., 182 and II, 29-33). Bisset himself, according to his biography in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 75 (1805), p.494, was master of an academy in Chelsea, and in her own day, Hamilton was regarded primarily as an educationalist, early biographies concentrating on this rôle, and demonstrating how unusual the position taken in her fiction was by referring to her own education in this manner as rather extraordinary (*A Biographical Dictionary of the Worthies of Ireland* (1819) and A. K. Elwood, *Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England* (1843), both in the *British Biographical Archive*, sheet 507).

<sup>31</sup> Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3', pp.62-63. Philp provides an excellent discussion of the tracts submitted to the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property (APLP) and the criteria, essentially the wish to avoid exporting an ideological debate to their readers, on which they were selected for publication. For details of the APLP tracts, see Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association - British Extraparliamentary Political Organization, 1769-1793* [Cambridge, Mass., 1963], especially pp.267-74, Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-93', *Historical Journal*, 4 (1961), 56-77, Donald E. Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93 and British Public Opinion', *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966), 179-90, Robert Hole, 'British Counter-Revolutionary Popular Propaganda', pp.53-63, and H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789-1815', in *Britain and the French Revolution*, ed. Dickinson [Basingstoke, 1989], pp.103-25.

<sup>32</sup> Roberts, *Memoirs*..., II, 425-26. My emphasis. More's determination to duplicate exactly the pattern of the radical productions led her, if the Bishop of London can be believed, to collect from 'her friends, the village hawkers and peddlers,' what would form 'the best sans-culottes library in Europe' (II, 428).

Clearly, what irked More was the *dissemination* to new audiences of the radical pamphlets. But it was this dissemination which made it imperative that reading be redeemed, and it was this dissemination that could vindicate the education of the lower orders, even the distribution of political material to them. The very fact that her Cheap Repository Tracts could be dropped into cottages, highways, mines and coalpits, could be displayed in streets, and on walls and windows - her constant boasts, in fact - provided their justification, and could finally overcome the reluctance of a Farmer Hoskins in spreading the capability to read to the whole of society.<sup>33</sup>

The utilization of institutions and techniques that had formerly been deemed the province of the enemies of the state opened an active front for the conservative campaign. The tactics which had been used with such effect by the forces of radicalism, at least as it seemed to many conservatives, once appropriated, enabled the protectors of the *status quo* to face their enemies on battlefields chosen long ago, and until the mid-'90s, left almost entirely undefended against the advance of the Jacobins. There had long been a general recognition that the great effectiveness of radical propaganda was derived not only from the persuasiveness of its message (obviously, no conservative could believe the substance itself would be convincing), but from the way in which it was delivered in an appropriate and seductive form and from the means by which it was disseminated. As much had been said at the trial of Paine for Seditious Libel, when the Attorney General had warned the jury to 'be pleased to take into [their] consideration the phrase and manner as well as the matter.'<sup>34</sup> For More, and other like-minded conservatives, imitation of this formula was naturally the next step to take in their crusade. Together with other parallel conservative endeavours, like the tracts of the Crown and Anchor Association or the efforts of Mrs Trimmer, the Cheap Repository securely established a tradition of conservative pamphlets which both outnumbered and outclassed the radical publications which had provided the initial inspiration. Exactly the same pattern was to recur with the novel. A fear of a reading public, and a fear of radicalism's ability to capture those readers, would suddenly combine to enable and encourage the anti-Jacobin novel to flourish.

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<sup>33</sup> The British Library edition of a contemporarily bound collection of the Cheap Repository Tracts for 1795 [London, 1796?] includes an accompanying note from Henry Thornton, the society's treasurer, which explains the methods of distribution employed. He cites extended families, schools, respectable societies, booksellers, hawkers, fairs, hospitals, prisons and the armed services as the targets for dispersion of the tracts, many being sent free, the rest subsidized by the subscription of patrons, whose recompense, as well as the greater security of the realm, were editions published on better quality paper and bound for their own consumption. The note also contains list of subscribers, with their subscriptions, which amount to a total of £1,078 from 789 persons, a sum so grand as to enable Thornton to comment that no further subscriptions would be required for the foreseeable future.

<sup>34</sup> '[H]e uses an artifice gross to those who can observe it, but dangerous in the extreme to those whose minds perhaps are not sufficiently cultivated and habituated to reading, to enable them to discover it'. *The Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason...*, compiled by T. B. Howell and Thomas James Howell [London, 1817], XXII, 383. J. T. Boulton picks up on this point in his consideration of radical literature, but neglects to apply it equally to conservative productions inspired by its success for the Painites. *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* [London, 1963], chs. 7-10 and p.250.

## 2 *The redemption of a genre*

In the 1793, third edition, of his *Curiosities of Literature* Isaac D'Israeli included in his 'literary, critical and historical' sketches of the age an essay entitled 'Romances'. After a perfunctory investigation of the way in which the novel had displaced the romance, he abruptly concluded by furnishing the reader with a stark, if equivocal, warning:

On this subject, I shall just observe, that a novel is a very dangerous poison in the hands of a libertine; it may be a salutary medicine in that of a virtuous writer.<sup>35</sup>

But D'Israeli's trepidation was fleeting. Whilst no opinion at all had been offered in earlier versions of the work, in subsequent revisions these misgivings gave way to a more optimistic and settled appreciation of the utility of the novel, along with even a certain patriotic pride in the British mastery of the genre. 'We have shown the world that we possess writers of the first order in this delightful province of Fiction', D'Israeli said, adding that,

After the abundant invective poured on this class of books, it is time to settle for ever the controversy, by asserting that these works of fiction are among the most instructive of every polished nation, and must contain all the useful truths of human life, if composed with genius.<sup>36</sup>

As befits a man who made his reputation observing prevailing trends in literature, D'Israeli's opinions on the novel - shifting from a guarded silence in 1791, to an apprehensive warning two years later and a sanguine and abiding vindication thereafter - were entirely characteristic of the judgements of his literary peers. He had accurately plotted the slow process of acceptance undergone by the novel, charting its journey towards a critical esteem which might almost have begun to match its popular appeal. His perspicacity in this matter should not surprise us, though, for as well as documenting the process, D'Israeli was part of it. Riding the crest of the wave which he had identified in the *Curiosities*, in 1797 he published *Vaurien; or, Sketches of the Times*, as deliberately an anti-Jacobin a novel as had then been published. D'Israeli's personal decision to enter the lists was a synecdoche of the wider literary response. It may have been inevitable that eventually critical acceptance would catch up with popular appreciation of the novel, and it may have been the case that Scott, Austen and certain others would ultimately have won the battle against any degree of critical hostility, but the promotion in status of the novel in the years that separated Isaac D'Israeli from his novel-writing son, nevertheless arose from its enlistment in the grand fight against the fearful dangers to established society which beset, or seemed to beset, Britain in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The novel became a weapon in the armoury of the conservatives, and many novelists, to a greater or lesser extent, became soldiers in the anti-Jacobin cause. The new

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<sup>35</sup> Isaac D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature* [3rd edn., London, 1793], p.221.

<sup>36</sup> D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, 5th edn., 'with large additions and improvements' [London, 1807-17], II, 260. Three separate 'fourth editions' exist, variously dated 1794, 1795 and 1798.



respect which the nineteenth century novel commanded was earned, like the spurs of an aspiring knight, through its service in the Revolutionary crisis of the 1790s.

As has been well documented, the novel's place in both literature and society had long been a highly contentious issue. In fact, although D'Israeli had represented the genre as *controversial* at the close of the eighteenth century, it would perhaps have been more accurate to speak of a welter of censorious criticism unbalanced by any serious or sustained apology. The articulation, and certainly the substance, of this abuse is too well-known to require repetition, however delectable the put-downs of reviewers, or provocative the self-righteousness of moralists' warnings. The development of criticism of the novel in the wake of its quartet of mid-century progenitors and the mill-stone reputation they bequeathed it, has been admirably traced by Joseph Heidler, W. F. Gallaway and John Tinnon Taylor, and chronicled by Ioan Williams.<sup>37</sup> Yet on more detailed consideration, the incensed denunciations of the '60s, '70s and '80s on which they have alighted may often seem rather more rhetorical than representative of any more considered acrimony. In appraising the disdain of the reviewers, for instance, we would do well not to dismiss the frequent accusations of hypocrisy from teasing novelists hinting that behind the mask of rectitude, critics of fiction enjoyed indulging in novels as much as anyone else. Indeed, it is actually rather difficult to find examples of the scathing sentences the critics would have us believe they routinely handed down.

Nevertheless, throughout the later eighteenth century, the novel was blamed by a substantial, and very vocal, section of society for many of its ills. The concern of James Beattie, schoolmaster, divine and poet, hyperbolic as it may seem, was not untypical. Romances and novels, he said, were 'a dangerous recreation', likely to lead not merely to a dislike for other more useful occupations, but to fill the mind 'with extravagant thoughts and too often with criminal propensities.'<sup>38</sup> Sarah Trimmer was similarly fearful of novel-reading's consequences, warning that such immoral works led inevitably to riot, intemperance, obscenity, and profanity, 'which too frequently ends in an *ignominious death*' at the hands of the public executioner.<sup>39</sup> If the criminality and riot that novels engendered seemed a threat in the 1780s, how much more so must it, and the fiction that begot it, have seemed a cause for concern to a nation actually in the grip of apprehension about imminent revolution?

Fear of fiction, even as it developed in the decades before the fall of the Bastille, the Declaration of Fraternity and the regicide, was built not on concern about the novel itself, but on an anxiety about who was reading it, and particularly those at the edge of the apparently widening circle. Criticism of the élite

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph Bunn Heidler, *The History, From 1700 to 1800, of English Criticism of Prose Fiction* [University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 13, Urbana, Illinois, 1928], W. F. Gallaway Jr., 'The Conservative Attitude Toward Fiction, 1770-1830', *PMLA*, 55 (1940), 1041-59, John Tinnon Taylor, *Early Opposition to the English Novel. The Popular Reaction from 1760 to 1830* [Morningside Heights, New York, 1943] and *Novel and Romance 1700-1800. A Documentary Record*, ed. Ioan Williams [London, 1970].

<sup>38</sup> James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* [Dublin, 1783], I, 237.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *Family Magazine*, I (1788), iv-v: 'Preface.'



reading novels may have been pretty common, but it was any indulgence in fiction by the lower orders of society, or those plucked out of them but still unfitted for their new, elevated rôle, that drew the most reprehension. The novel, effectually, had become a stalking horse for addressing a deeper malaise in society, the formation of an educated, literate, unsettled and ambitious tendency amongst what ought to have been the humbler orders of society. Occasionally this anxiety can become very apparent. Thomas Monro, another clergyman, with a frivolity which jars with the desperation with which others treated the issue, resolved that were he allowed to dictate upon the matter, none should be permitted to peruse a novel unless possessed of an estate of seven hundred a year, clear of mortgage and every other encumbrance.<sup>40</sup> And it was doubtless for the same reasons that a correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* proposed a tax on novels which would render their cost so prohibitive as to avoid burdening further the nation's poor, for the novels would have been elevated beyond their reach.<sup>41</sup>

As we have seen, such a putative readership was chiefly dangerous because it was indiscriminating, unable to distinguish between that literature that was safe or even useful, and that which, either by the author's malicious design or through simple irresponsibility, was dangerous. Fiction in particular was guilty of conjuring a chimerical vision of life, as full of heroes, heroines and easily acquired fortunes as it was empty of the harsh realities of life, a utopian no-place in which a naïve reader might confidently place his or her faith. Such consternation, although couched, as it often was, in the more specific ridicule of the gothic novel, is familiar to us from *Northanger Abbey*. But Austen's mockery, and the whole tradition of 'anti-gothics' of which it was a part, should not be allowed to disguise the urgent didacticism of many earlier assaults.<sup>42</sup> Mary Charlton's archetypal burlesque, *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (1799), for instance, presents us with conventional criticism of the gothic, as well as the well-rehearsed metaphor of fiction's infectiousness, when she dispatches a severe fever as a salutary corrective for our protagonist's predilection for exploring cold chapels in order to discover the persecuted heroines who have, no doubt, been incarcerated there.<sup>43</sup> But more importantly we are also witness to some

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<sup>40</sup> 'Such people have a right to fling away their time as they please,' he added, since 'the works of the loom receive no impediment from their idleness, and it is at least an innocent though insipid amusement.' In fact, that novels should be thought an innocent amusement even for society's elite was something of a triumph in the history of the genre's public relations. Thomas Monro [or Monroe], *Olla Podrida*, 15 (1787), in *Novel and Romance. A Documentary Record*, ed. Williams, pp.349-50.

<sup>41</sup> The correspondent was prepared, however, to exempt from the tax more serious works, which 'should ever be circulated free as air'. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 57 (1787), 1048-49.

<sup>42</sup> For a partial list of satires of the gothic novels, and a more detailed treatment of one of the pinnacles of the genre, Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), see Archibald Shepperson, 'Gothic Nonsense' in *The English Gothic Novel: A Miscellany in Four Volumes*, ed. Thomas Meade Harwell [*Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Romantic Reassessment*, ed. James Hogg, Salzburg, 1986], I, 237-51.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Charlton, *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* [London, 1799], II, 178-207. Only when Rosella has been educated by the vicissitudes of the plot to despise the novels her mother has taught her to respect, can she inherit her fortune and wed Lord Clanallen. The infectiousness of fiction was a favourite theme, often the subject of metaphorical satire. Mary Robinson, for example, has a bookseller lambast a maid for returning a novel bought (or borrowed?) only that morning by her sickly mistress: it will 'infect half the town with her disorder,' he cries, adding, 'I have known no less than four persons destroyed within the last six weeks, merely by the infection which has been conveyed through the medium of novels. Nothing can be more destructive' (*The Natural Daughter* [London, 1799], II, 43).

very real evils the illusory expectations bred by novels will bring. When the realities of the world are ignored in favour of the fantastic expectations raised by novels, for instance, authentic indigence is never alleviated because our heroines refuse to sully themselves with anything not quite picturesque.<sup>44</sup> The author's lesson is left to the sensible Mr. Mordaunt, who tells Rosella, and the reader, that he hopes 'her past danger will henceforth teach her to pay a little more deference to the established usages of society than I hear she has lately done'.<sup>45</sup>

The new philosophy of French and British Jacobins was, according to both its own proponents' definitions and those dispensed by its antagonists, a system which deliberately clashed with these established usages. In the same context as Rosella's lesson, we remember Hannah More's Mr. Fantom, the new-fashioned philosopher, who fails to help the poor in his parish, and to prevent his servant from being hanged after a life of crime precipitated by Fantom's own doctrines, because 'individual kindness is not consistent with universal philanthropy'.<sup>46</sup> But in this Cheap Repository Tract we are witnessing the evolution from a traditional concern about novels' effect on naïve readers, about their fabrication of chimerical, parallel system of values, into a more overtly political concern about the chimerical delusions of the new philosophers, schemes which even if they might sound alluring in contemplation, could never survive the translation into real life. Naturally, no conservative could ever accept the veracity of the apologies made for Revolutionary France, nor the logic of the stance taken by Price or Paine, so in assessing the threat of the Jacobin position, they were forced to conclude that its danger stemmed from its *plausibility*, however delusive. Since its principles were obviously and necessarily false, its allure was its threat, its charisma its danger, and thus, its *propagation* its crime. Whilst those able to discern its fallacies would dismiss it, the indiscriminating reader might fall under its spell, especially if it were placed before them in the captivating terms of a novel, decked out in the bewitching forms and debonair language which fiction could deliver. A new, more political reprehension of fiction fitted snugly into the tradition of criticism already well established. So while fiction had been endlessly censured for 'painting vice and folly in their most gaudy colours' to 'allure the innocent and seduce the unwary', the '90s simply elaborated on the theme by condemning 'those seditious, yet dangerous *because plausible*, publications with which the press at this period groaned'.<sup>47</sup> Jacobinism added a new urgency to the incrimination of the novel, but built upon already existing structures, without, as it were, the necessity of any new legislation being added to the statute book.

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<sup>44</sup> Just as Monro had warned: 'I am often afraid lest the same eye which is so prone to give its tributary tear to the well-told history of fancied woe, should be able to look upon real misery without emotion, because its tale is told without plot, incident, or ornament'. *Olla Podrida* (1787), quoted in *Novel and Romance*, ed. Williams, p.350.

<sup>45</sup> Charlton, *Rosella*, II, 6-8 and IV, 113.

<sup>46</sup> More, *The History of Mr. Fantom, the New-Fangled Philosopher, and his Man William*, in *Works* [London, 1840], I, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Anon., *The History of Sir George Warrington; or, the Political Quixote* [London, 1797], II, 83 and 93. My emphasis.

In fact, despite some manifestly Jacobin productions, the most obvious testimony of the existence of Jacobin novels is provided by its opponents rather than exponents. Whether their often hysterical identification of the inexorable menace of Jacobin fiction is accurate is more questionable. Certainly it often resembled an advanced state of paranoia, and, as we shall see, could be used as the perfect apology for an apprehensive novelist's own authorial endeavours. Prefaces from the early '90s and for the next fifteen or twenty years abounded in lamentations, like this one from 1805, that 'Novels and Romances have, of late years, been too frequently rendered the vehicles of revolutionary and infidel principles', the threat being alarming enough for some zealots to dedicate years of their life and thousands of pages, to exposing it.<sup>48</sup> Most vigorous of those who diagnosed this Jacobin disease was T. J. Mathias, whose 'crazy forgotten book,' as Byron called it in only 1822, has yet to receive the attention its influence deserves.<sup>49</sup> By 1794, when his first dialogue was published, he could restrain himself no longer. 'The time for discrimination seems to be come,' he said, and offered a series of stark warnings against Jacobin novelists: 'Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Mary Robinson, Mrs. &c., &c.,' he cautioned, are all 'too frequently whining or frisking in novels, till our girls' heads turn wild with impossible adventures,' - and departing from this very conventional criticism - 'and now and then are tainted with democracy.'<sup>50</sup> And this was a charge taken up, as one would expect, by Robert Bisset, whose novel, *Modern Literature* (1804), was fundamentally another careful, and calculatedly horrific, dissection of Jacobinism's cancerous growth within the literary body. Fictionalising many of Mathias' concerns, Bisset had his heroine encounter with 'Jemima', evidently Mary Wollstonecraft, who reveals her plans for a hierarchy of women to disseminate her principles. With herself as primate and one 'Mary' - Hays by her description - as her 'archbishop', it only remained to pick, from the many available candidates, twenty-four 'bishops'. When those selected are 'chiefly the writers of sentimental and loving novels', and yet are largely composed of authors who, both to posterity and their contemporaries, have appeared lacking in any genuinely radical credentials, we can see the dread of Jacobinism in fiction at its height.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> T. Harral, *Scenes of Life. A Novel* [London, 1805], quoted in the *British Critic*, 26 (1805), 321. A remarkably early expression of this concern is to be found in the anonymous (but by P. Littlejohn?) *Cipher, or The World as it Goes* [London, 1791]. I have not been able to see a copy, but, according to Allene Gregory, it has a preface 'bewailing the use of fiction to corrupt the age with Revolutionary doctrines', although the novel itself apparently confines itself 'to common place morality'. Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel* [New York, 1915], p.156.

<sup>49</sup> T. J. Mathias, *The Pursuits of Literature. A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues* [1794-97; 7th edn., London, 1798]. Byron to Lord Holland, 11 May 1822, in *Byron: A Self-Portrait in Letters and Diaries*, ed. P. Quennell [London, 1950], II, 694.

<sup>50</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, 61n.c and 58n.zz.

<sup>51</sup> Bisset, *Modern Literature*, III, 204-16. Jemima is the name of a protagonist in Wollstonecraft's *Maria* (1798). Those selected to be her lieutenants are a Mrs Sonnet, Mrs Egotist, Mrs and Miss Twostools, Miss Harry Clarendon and Miss Derwent Priory. The last of these is presumably A. Kendall, author of the 1798 novel of that name, and 'Miss Harry Clarendon' the anonymous author of *The History of Sir Henry Clarendon* (1785), neither of which works have ever been thought worthy enough to be granted the status of Jacobin novels. The 'Twostools' are obscure enough to have eluded my inquiries entirely. 'Sonnet', whose novels, according to Jemima, 'have proposed to decry existing institutions, exalt the philosophers of France, and to debase what is called female virtue, by an attempt to show that it depends on accident, and not principle', is doubtlessly Mary Robinson, who, as author of numerous poems lamenting the fate of Marie Antoinette and novels describing the horror of the Revolution in France (*Hubert de Sevrac* and *The Natural Daughter*, 1796 and 1799), might very well have objected to being the constant butt of many anti-Jacobins' crusades. 'Egotist' is Charlotte Smith, who since 1794's *Banished Man* had adhered more or less strictly to a conservative agenda, but who

Whatever the reality of the Jacobin novel, then, it is the panic endemic in its reception that is most significant. It seems never to have occurred to those berating the Jacobin novel that the reading public might not have actually wanted to read radical literature, something that, as the 1790s progressed, seems increasingly likely to have been the case. The 'widened circle' of readers was regarded as purely passive in the eyes of the anti-Jacobins, a body without a volition of its own, and who were so indiscriminating as to be won over by whoever produced the most alluring and available fiction. It was without their knowing it that these guileless readers would be drawn into iniquity, which made not Jacobinism itself, however reprehensible, the primary object of reproach, but its transmission through fiction. Nowhere is this made clearer than in *Modern Literature*, the hero of which, William Hamilton, reads the philosophical treatise of one 'St. Leon' - that is to say Godwin's *Political Justice* - and, being an educated and sensible man, immediately spots its many errors. The danger only arises when a narrative - *Caleb Williams* - appears in its support:

Subtle sophistry alone could hardly establish the inutility of criminal justice, but an affecting fable, setting forth the punishment of innocence and escape of guilt, strongly interests the feelings; *and the emotions of the heart are mistaken for the conclusions of the head*. A fictitious tale of an individual case is so skilfully managed, as, to many, to appear a fair and general exhibition of penal law, and its operation. Virtuous sensibility is exerted against the necessary muniments of property, and the correctives of crimes. Such was the mis-application of great literary powers, that sprung from the boundless love of innovation.<sup>52</sup>

Fiction was dangerous because it was able to engage the reader and to appear to prove a point without requiring any recourse to reason. If it was well-written, by an author of talent like Godwin, so much the worse, for it would be that much more proficient in its aims.<sup>53</sup> But also, Bisset implies, the danger arose

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Jemima praises for encouraging filial disobedience, decrying every civil, ecclesiastical and political, as well as domestic, authority, and constantly reprehending what she calls 'the execrable and abominable constitutions which we are obliged to suffer in Britain.' In his *Douglas*, Bisset had already characterised Smith and Robinson as 'Charlotte Self-Praise' and 'Laura Maria', both repeating 'from Voltaire, Rousseau, or, without going so far away, from Tom Paine, or Tom Croft [Holcroft] all 'the badness of Kings, Priests, Nobles and Gentry,' and, from Croft and the newspaper of 'Cachagee' [Godwin?], 'that every virtue is excluded from the habitation of the exalted,' and 'that all vice is owing to the distinction between rich and poor' (*Douglas*, III, 38).

<sup>52</sup> Bisset, *Modern Literature*, III, 181-82. See also the opinions of Bisset's hero's near namesake, William Hamilton Reid, who wrote in 1800 that the 'deceptive system' of atheism had been given a false lustre by the 'most poignant ridicule, the finest sallies of wit, and the most brilliant traits of imagination', and that 'the pernicious dogmas of their school captivated the attention, and were conveyed to the heart in the enchanting page of a novel, amidst the feigned adventures and passionate endearments of lovers'. *Rise and Dissolution of Infidel Societies*, p.27.

<sup>53</sup> Bisset had singled out Godwin and Smith as writers of great talent (*Modern Literature*, III, 177 and 213), though he could not quite bring himself to praise Wollstonecraft or Hays, even if it would only have emphasised the hazard they posed. Mathias' famous eulogy to 'the Mighty Magician of the MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO' is well-known, but he too could also praise his enemies, commending Smith for her poetical prowess and mastery of pathos with a fairness that sits oddly with his almost unrelenting polemic (*Pursuits of Literature*, 58-61n.22). Likewise, Henry James Pye, the Laureate, could also modestly praise the talents of his political foes even when lamenting that they had enlisted in the cause of Britain's enemies. He does not name these writers, but seems subsequently to reveal their identities when he comments that the effect of a reunion or a tale of woe on the protagonists could only be drawn by the pen of a Radcliffe or Smith (*The Aristocrat. A Novel* [London, 1799], I, 167, II, 107 and 166). By and large, though, the anti-Jacobin line on talent was that it was of tertiary importance, behind innocence and instructiveness, and to be condemned if used for any corrupt purpose (see *British Critic*, 11 (1798), p.316). As R. C. Dallas put it: 'Wit is in Morals what Liberty is in Politics, and Wine in Diet: well used, it strengthens the mind, exhilarates, and elevates; ill-used, it enfeebles, inebriates, and destroys'. *Percival, or Nature Vindicated* [London, 1801], 'Preface', I, x.



because novels were read by those who would not read philosophical treatises. Jane West even appeared to remember with fondness the long gone days when 'Deistical tenets' were 'enveloped in the thick pages of some metaphysical treatise', before they became routinely 'insinuated into novels' and 'lowered to every capacity, or degree of leisure and information.'<sup>54</sup>

The idea that the novel was being enlisted by Godwin and his fellow Jacobins for the furtherance of their principles was, for once, not entirely part of the hydra-headed conspiracy created in anti-Jacobin imagination. Godwin had actually admitted his tactical use of fiction in the 'Preface' to *Caleb Williams* and in his letter to the *British Critic* of July 1795.<sup>55</sup> Gilbert Imlay was also apparently quite happy to use his preface to tell his readers that he had chosen the novel as the most effectual way of turning their attention to his radical view of the political and moral issues of the day.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, it was this deliberate strategic deployment of the novel that most incensed Jacobinism's opponents, and provoked a response. Mixed with the angry denunciation of, particularly Godwin's, Jacobin novels, a determination to reply in kind quickly became evident. Anti-Jacobin novelists began to respond *in kind* to a Jacobin incursion into fiction. For them to have spontaneously politicised their novels would have been an unthinkable dissemination of an ideological debate to many whom they considered unequipped to participate in it. Indeed, many held that novels had a particularly unfitted constituency for political disputation. So it was only when this constituency was assailed by Jacobinism, contaminated by debate, that a conservative political novel could be contemplated. Anti-Jacobin fiction, for the great majority of its exponents, existed only as an antidote, never as spontaneous and self-contained propaganda.

Skipping forward beyond the heyday of the anti-Jacobin novel, the process by which radical possession of weapons permitted, or even demanded, an anti-Jacobin reply in kind could not have a clearer illustration than Hannah More's own, somewhat tardy, decision to produce a novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809), no moralist of her age having previously written (as her biographer recounts) 'with more vehement disapproval of novel reading and novel writing than she.'<sup>57</sup> Indeed, More virtually repeated in *Coelebs* the conversation she had dramatised almost fifteen years earlier in her tract, 'The

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<sup>54</sup> In those days, '[e]very parent took pains to encourage a love of reading, and "he is safe at his books" was a common expression.' West, *Letters Addressed to a Young Man* [London, 1801], III, 185-86. See also Joseph Wildman, *The Force of Prejudice, A Moral Tale* [London, 1799], I, 67-68.

<sup>55</sup> Godwin, *Caleb Williams* ed. Maurice Hindle [1794; Harmondsworth, 1988], p.3 and *British Critic*, 6 (1795), 94. Godwin's strategy is well lampooned in Edward Dubois' anti-Jacobin novel *St. Godwin* (1800) which, behind the apparently flippant ridicule, manifests both a genuine anxiety about Godwin's achievement in popularising his opinions, and an identification of the necessity of a counter-blast. St. Godwin, Dubois' narrator, records that he 'wrote in the same pompous inflated style as I had used in my other publications, hoping that my fine, high-sounding periods would assist to make the unsuspecting reader swallow all the insidious reasoning, absurdity, and nonsense I could invent. The plan succeeded for some time, but at last, they burlesqued my works, and made me look a fool!' Dubois, *St. Godwin: A Tale of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Century* [London, 1800], pp.234-35.

<sup>56</sup> Gilbert Imlay, *The Emigrants* [London, 1793], quoted in J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800* [London, 1932], p.301.

<sup>57</sup> Jones, *Hannah More*, p.191.



Sunday School', in which the precarious nature of the times had at length persuaded Hoskins, the old-fashioned 'squire, of the pressing need for the education of the poor. 'Let us ... rescue from the hands of the profane and the impure, the monopoly of wit which they affect to possess,' counselled the sagacious Mr. Stanley in *Coelebs*, prompting the transparently named Mr. Tyrrel, an antinomian of antiquated and tyrannical opinions, to reply that a good man in his sense of the word would neither read nor write works of the imagination. For Stanley, as for More, this was no longer enough: 'by whatever instrument piety is advantaged', we are told, 'use that though thou grindest thy spears and arrows at the forges of the Philistines.'<sup>58</sup> This was the rehabilitation of the novel, but not through any virtue of its own, but only because its wide appeal promised to serve More's ends well. 'Dissemination' - the spread of the reading habit to new readers - to use Jon P. Klancher's word (who contrasts this with 'circulation', by which he means the growth of reading amongst those already consuming literature<sup>59</sup>), was the novel's curse, but it was also the means of its redemption, even to the extent that More had deliberately designed her fiction to turn the mainspring of the widening circle, the circulating library, to her advantage: 'A little to raise the tone of that mart of mischief and to counteract its corruption', she wrote in extenuation of *Coelebs*, 'I thought was an object worth attempting.'<sup>60</sup>

Although she was certainly doing both, by 1809 More may more properly be seen as promulgating an apology for her novel than broadcasting a call to arms to fellow authors. More distinct and desperate attempts to muster the forces of fidelity and loyalty to a literary holy war were to be heard more than a decade earlier, above the din of the Revolution crisis at its height. T. J. Mathias' voice was probably the loudest, but not the least sophisticated, as he succeeded in fusing an abhorrence of novels, which permeated his every page, with a faith in their redemption. France, he insisted, had enforced her principles on other nations through war and invasion, but she had other means, no less terrible, and no less certain. What he was doing, he made clear, was speaking to all those who had 'the courage, and learning, and ability' to frustrate those means, 'not by force, (God Forbid!) but by reasoning, and by appeals to the understanding', and, characteristically, he was not shy of elaborating and explaining exactly just what he meant. It was his constant theme in fact: 'LITERATURE,' he reiterated, '*well or ill conducted, IS THE GREAT ENGINE by which, I am fully persuaded, all civilized states must ultimately be supported or overthrown*', leaving no doubt that he was not merely calling for vigilance, but also for a response.<sup>61</sup> And Mathias was not asking for volunteers for his crusade, he was press-ganging. The animosity he reserved

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<sup>58</sup> Stanley is quoting Bishop Jeremy Taylor. *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* [London, 1809], II, 35-56. More even appeared to congratulate the 'abettors of revolutionary principles' on their 'acuteness to perceive, that so to discredit [the clergy in fiction] was one of their most powerful engines' (II, 9-10). Perhaps More did indeed believe that had it not been for Jacobin tracts and novels, many of the works for which she was best remembered, and best remunerated, would never have been called forth.

<sup>59</sup> Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences*, p.34.

<sup>60</sup> More to Sir W. W. Pepys, 13 December 1809, in Roberts, *Memoirs*, III, 313.

<sup>61</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, pp.162, 169 and 161-62.

for those whose works he felt were 'tainted with democracy' was designed to be a severe deterrent; his approval for those who answered the call, no less evidently a reward.<sup>62</sup> The means by which Mathias and his ilk were able to enjoin a strict ideological rectitude on novelists I will be discussing in chapter nine, but here it is sufficient to notice that his threats, or calls to arms, were demonstrably heeded by many authors.

Certainly, by the middle of the decade, several authors were at least heeding the nation's distress, and asserting how morally and politically incumbent upon them it was that they should do everything in their power to aid its cause. Not only did they produce anti-Jacobin texts, but, usefully to the historian (although it in fact reflected their anxiety about pursuing this course), they frequently depicted or dramatised their own conversion to this actively anti-Jacobin literary campaign. In 1796, for instance, Elizabeth Hamilton (echoing More's tract 'A Cure for Melancholy') presented the evidently autobiographical Charlotte regretting that, lacking both a fortune and a family, she could not be of use to her country. Mr. Denbeigh, her, and our, mentor, swiftly replies that such regrets are merely the subterfuges of indolence, that 'the power of doing good' is not circumscribed within such narrow limits. Why, he asks, should her mind, 'cultivated as it is by education, and improved by listening to the conversation of the judicious', why 'should it not exert its powers, not only for your own entertainment, but for the instruction, or innocent amusement of others?' And Charlotte's last misgiving - 'Ah! Sir,' she returns, 'You know how female writers are looked down upon. The women fear and hate, the men ridicule, and dislike them' - demonstrates how she thought such a meritorious motivation could apologise for what she knew had for so long been actionable offenses at the tribunals governing both literature and the conduct of women in society.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Compare, for instance, Mathias' seemingly purely literary eulogies for the politically correct Samuel Richardson, Frances Burney and Ann Radcliffe (pp.58-60n.zz), John Gifford, 'the most correct author since Pope' (p.155n.i), Robert Nares (pp.176-77n.e-f), Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff (p.224n.e), William Paley (p.302n.h), Beilby Porteus (p.302n.i), the Abbé Barruel and John Robison (pp.365-67n.q-t), John Bowdler (p.376n.t), William Cowper (p.416n.I), Richard Cumberland (p.417n.III) and Edmund Burke (p.419-20n.o), with his contempt for the ostensibly literary talents of Richard Sheridan (p.48n.e), Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson and Elizabeth Inchbald (p.58n.zz), Robert Southey (p.350-51n.y), Thomas Holcroft (p.353n.c), John Thelwall (p.354n.f) and above all, Matthew Lewis (pp.238-46 and 345n.s) and William Godwin, 'a monster whose faults are not compensated by a single excellence' (p.210n.p, 353n.b and 367n.r). It need hardly be pointed out that Mathias' 'literary' appraisals always exactly coincided with his political estimations of the author under consideration. In fact, there were three authors whose literary talents Mathias apparently felt he could not judge according to political rectitude alone. Bishop Samuel Horsley, however correct his principles, was too dull to become 'The Second Philippick' (pp.180-81n.k and 300-301n.d-e), John Reeves (p.252n.f) would let his metaphors get him into trouble, whilst the verses of Henry James Pye, though well-intentioned, rather than stirring audiences to patriotic probity, put them to sleep, which fate befell the front ranks of the soldiers assembled to hear him at Barham Downs and Waverly Common (p.122n.x). These three, however, are the exceptions.

<sup>63</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 334-35. The idea that publication by women, especially on 'public' subjects, was a transgression against a female propriety still rigidly enjoined and enforced in the late eighteenth century, is in the process of being challenged. Nevertheless, the identification of separate and inviolate gender spheres, whether a rhetorical construction or not, must remain central to the understanding of women's writing in the 1790s and well into the nineteenth century, and is best set out in Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer. Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* [Chicago, 1984]. The foundation of the challenge to her ideas may be seen in Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* [New Haven, 1992; rpt. London, 1994], ch.vi. Also useful are Karl von den Steinen, 'The Discovery of Women in Eighteenth-Century Political Life' and Barbara B. Schnorrenberg, with Jane E. Hunter, 'The Eighteenth-Century Englishwoman' in *The Women of England. From Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present*, ed. Barbara Kanner [London, 1980], pp.229-58 and 183-228; Mitzi Myers, 'Reform or Ruin: A Revolution in Female Manners', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 11 (1982), 199-216; and

Ann Thomas, in her *Adolphus de Biron*, probably of 1795, put a more political emphasis on what she evidently felt was her duty to defend society against its dangers. Pre-empting the sentiments of his namesake in *Coelebs*, the wise Mr. Stanley of Thomas' novel offered his advice:

When turbulent Men are so industrious in disseminating Sedition through the Land, every good Subject, and every true Patriot ought to be as vigilant to incite in himself, and in his Neighbour, that Obedience to the Laws, and Respect to the chief Magistrate, which may secure and promote Concord and Quiet.<sup>64</sup>

So powerful was this rationale - that it was incumbent on each individual to do their utmost in support of church and king - that it could exonerate not merely fiction, but also political fiction, and even its production by women, which when it was possessed of a political tendency like that of Thomas and Hamilton, would previously have constituted for many, and certainly for Hamilton and Thomas, a glaring transgression against the very strictest codes of gender propriety. Thomas and Hamilton were attempting to vindicate their literary endeavours by declaring their necessity, or rather having trustworthy characters in their fiction affirm it for them. This fictional affirmation was a useful distancing device, and indeed, in her own preface, Thomas had felt obliged to be rather more reticent, articulating only the trepidation about producing political fiction which would prompt the subsequent attempted justification: 'If an Apology be necessary for the political Part of the Novel,' she ventured nervously, 'permit me to declare, that I could not lose the Opportunity of expressing my Gratitude for that Protection which every Individual enjoys under the BRITISH CONSTITUTION.'<sup>65</sup> In claiming only a rather passive rectitude, instead of the very active anti-Jacobinism that she was actually to produce, Thomas demonstrates what a pivotal position she occupies. In 1795, a few anti-Jacobin novels had already been published, but they had been characterised either by a diffidence which still appreciated the danger of any political fiction or a defiance which set at nought the tradition of criticism of fiction. It was not until the later '90s, although in Thomas and Hamilton we see a stage in its maturation, that anti-Jacobin fiction began to feel comfortable with its rôle. Before turning to its zenith, however, its origins, which literary history has altogether passed by, merit some investigation.

If Charlotte Smith's not entirely unsung *Banished Man* (1794) embodies a proud and determined attempt to incorporate conservatism into fiction, two novels of 1793 exhibit a more conventional trepidation. For the anonymous author of *The Minstrel*, a conviction that politics in a novel is absolutely forbidden, because of fiction's likely readership, is still very apparent, and yet alongside, an undeniable anti-Jacobinism also begins to manifest itself. In her preface she insisted that 'though necessarily led, by the personages of her drama, cursorily to introduce some subjects lately much agitated,' she had no intention whatsoever of joining 'her feeble voice to either of those parties which, at present, divide a large

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Lucinda Cole, '(Anti)Feminist Sympathies: The Politics of Relationship in Smith, Wollstonecraft, and More', *ELH*, 58 (1991), 107-40.

<sup>64</sup> Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel. Founded on the French Revolution* [Plymouth, 1795?], II, 74.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, I, v.

proportion of Europe'. And yet, as well as offering some distinctly political opinions on the Revolution in France (a general sympathy with the French typical amongst those observing developments in France in early '92), she also proffered a lucid, and almost prescient, warning to British Jacobins, so confident that its seems almost anachronistic. That a native of Britain, she wrote, 'should wish to throw off the mild government of its king, free himself from the salutary restraint of its laws, subvert all order, annihilate all subordination,' only to see the nation ruled by 'the caprice of a lawless mob' must, she went on, 'be deemed the most glaring insanity. Far be it from the author of *THE MINSTREL*,' she concluded, 'to spread such a detestable mania, or contribute to its baleful effects.'<sup>66</sup> Only in this last sentence do we return from a glaring anti-Jacobinism to the apology from which we started out.

In her *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* of the same year as *The Minstrel* Clara Reeve, though still evincing a degree of reluctance about brazenly introducing political concerns into her fiction, tilts the balance further in favour of a positive political didacticism. Reeve's preface defines the purpose of her tale in orthodox terms, speaking of her wish to inculcate wisdom, encourage reform, and to discourage complacency about the present day, comparing it with Britain's half-legendary past - certainly a political statement in itself, of course, in the light of what Burke had said in the *Reflections*. But she also not only wishes to place these lessons in a very contemporary context, but shatters any vestige of ideological neutrality by proposing that her fiction might be of service in demolishing the folly, or vice, of British radicalism. Her chief stimulus in writing the novel, she admitted, was 'to give a faithful picture of a well-governed kingdom, wherein a true subordination of ranks and degrees was observed, and of a great prince at the head of it.' For, she added,

The new philosophy of the present day avows a levelling principle, and declares that a state of anarchy is more beautiful than that of order and regularity. There is nothing more likely to convince mankind of the errors of these men, than to set before them examples of good government, and warnings of the mischievous consequences of their own principles.<sup>67</sup>

In the novel itself, as in *The Minstrel* too, Reeve was still sheltering behind her allegory, apparently unwilling to labour a political point, but the possibility of a positive conservative agenda for fiction had been established and, most momentously, by a female, popular, novelist, with a well-founded reputation for absolute propriety, and whose novels and treatises had done much, in her own words, 'to point out the boundaries' of the genre.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Anon., *The Minstrel; or, Anecdotes of Distinguished Personages in the Fifteenth Century* [London, 1793], I, iii-iv.

<sup>67</sup> Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon, the Natural Son of Edward Prince of Wales* [London, 1793], I, xxii-xxiii, xvi and xvi-xvii.

<sup>68</sup> Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, I, vi. Reeve's *Old English Baron* (1777) had been tremendously successful, as well as influential in its synthesis of the gothic and domestic novel, as if combining Richardson and Walpole in equal measures. Her *Progress of Romance* was in many respects the standard text-book of later eighteenth-century opinions on all branches of fiction, a model of suspicion of the form combined with appreciation of its value, leaving her rectitude undoubted. See for instance her condemnation of circulating libraries (II, 79) or of the dangers of religious enthusiasm in fiction (II, 41-43).

That there was no outpouring of conservative novels between 1793 and the last one or two years of the century is a matter requiring attention. The mid-1790s were, after all, the years of the most vituperative debate and conflict, or rather the years when an ecumenical anti-Jacobinism established itself as the dominant ideology and did not shrink from pushing home its advantage through tracts, sermons and associations, as well as legislation. A few anti-Jacobin novels made their appearance in the middle of the decade, but in nothing like the numbers in which they would be published after about 1798. It is true that there were, at least nominally, stringent regulations militating against the politicisation of fiction, even if it was of a conservative tendency, yet these restrictions were not as rigorously enforced as might be imagined. Reviewers, for example, seldom censured authors, of either gender, for an expression of conservative politics, even in the most popular of novels. Just after its establishment in 1793, the *British Critic* took no exception to *Sir Roger de Clarendon*, although it thought its morality could not alone support a novel, and it actually praised *The Minstrel*, *The Banished Man* and Pye's *Democrat* of 1795.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps then, the most important factor in the chronology of the rise of the anti-Jacobin novel was the fact that Jacobin fiction, from which it drew its *raison d'être*, did not reach its apogee before the mid-'90s at the earliest. Essentially, it was only these Jacobin novels, and not Jacobinism *per se*, that allowed the anti-Jacobin novel to flourish.

The Jacobin fictions which appeared most menacing, and for most conservatives symbolised all Jacobin novels, were Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799), both of which launched veritable flotillas of rejoinders and allowed the anti-Jacobin novel to define itself in terms of what it was not. This is conspicuous in the attempts of Sophia King and Henry Pye, both of whom had already produced anti-Jacobin novels, to continue justifying their political fiction with reference to Godwin's novels. King sought to justify her exercise in the gothic, *The Fatal Secret* (1801), by asking whether Godwin himself did not 'arbitrarily usurp and seize the fairy world of magic, wildly weaving, like the fatal sisters, a net to ensnare us' in his *St. Leon*.<sup>70</sup> And Pye, along with many passing shots at Godwin's fiction, included in his *Aristocrat* of 1799 a 'short digression on some of the novels of the present day' which specifically condemned *Caleb Williams* for its diabolical method of 'collecting and connecting every possible event in such a manner, as to produce a probable series of incidents that shall make mankind dissatisfied with their natural or political situation, or plead an excuse for the breach of fidelity and chastity'. Aware of the fact that he himself was using exactly the same technique in his attempt to redeem fiction by enrolling it in the anti-Jacobin cause, Pye wisely added that, on the other hand, 'commendable is such art when used to inculcate virtuous principles, or even to afford innocent amusement.'<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *British Critic*, 2 (1793), 383-88; 2 (1793), 280; 4 (1794), 621-23; and 6 (1795), 669-71.

<sup>70</sup> King, *The Fatal Secret, or, Unknown Warrior; a Romance of the Twelfth Century* [London, 1801], p.vi.

<sup>71</sup> Pye, *Aristocrat*, I, 129, 131.



This was, of course, entirely in accordance with Mathias' demands for a literary response to a literary threat. And George Walker, for one, explicitly betrayed Mathias' influence in his *Vagabond* (1799), partly in its epigraph, a pertinent passage from *The Pursuits of Literature*, but also in Walker's dedication, congratulating Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, on his unsurpassed works in favour of religion, morality and liberty, before tentatively suggesting that 'perhaps a *Novel* may gain attention, when arguments of the soundest sense and most perfect eloquence may fail' and excusing his own production as 'an attempt to parry the Enemy with their own weapons; for no channel is deemed improper by them, which can introduce their sentiments.'<sup>72</sup> It is from this *Mathiasian* determination to fight the enemy with their own weapons, and indeed from this metaphor itself, that the unanimity of anti-Jacobin fiction derives. Jane West, for instance, expressed the same slightly ersatz hesitation about entering the fray in 1799, using her narrator to ensure the reader understood that since 'the most fashionable, and perhaps the most successful, way of vending pernicious sentiments has been through the medium of books of entertainment' then it must be 'not only allowable, but necessary, to repel the enemy's insidious attacks with similar weapons.'<sup>73</sup> Above all, this attempt to justify conservative fiction was premised on the notion of the widened circle of readers (a potent 'myth', however accurate it may actually have been). It was the perceived spread of literature to new, and unqualified readers, which rendered novels which preached a political and moral rectitude so vital to the well-being of the nation.

This realisation is often clearly visible. In 1802, for example, West once again prominently displayed her attempt to justify her forays into fiction, presenting herself as having undergone some kind of conversion. Indeed, her apology to the public forms such a comprehensive summary of the anti-Jacobin approach that it is worth quoting in full:

The rage for novels does not decrease; and, though I by no means think them the best vehicles for 'the words of sound doctrine'; yet while the enemies of our church and state continue to pour their poison into unwary ears through this channel, it behoves the friends of our establishments to convey an antidote by the same course; especially as those who are most likely to be infected by false principles, will not search for a refutation of them in profound and scientific compositions.<sup>74</sup>

West's last phrase provides what was the clinching, and continually recurring, argument - that novel-readers would not look into disquisitions or pay attention to sermons, and were therefore liable to fall

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<sup>72</sup> George Walker, *The Vagabond. A Novel* [London, 1799], I, iii and vi.

<sup>73</sup> West, *A Tale of the Times* [London, 1799], III, 386-87.

<sup>74</sup> West, *The Infidel Father* [London, 1802], I, ii. So clichéd had such justifications become that Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) appears almost to lampoon them. Her preface has 'Geoffrey Jarvis', a strange construction ostensibly designed to protect the author's identity, discover, and send for publication, the manuscript of the novel that follows, telling the publisher that 'the opinions conveyed to the young and unthinking through the medium of philosophical novels' have prompted the work, and that it appears to him 'an excellent antidote to the poison; calculated to make an impression on those to whom serious disquisitions would have been addressed in vain.' If she is not being uncharacteristically conceited, Hamilton seems to be poking fun at those who glibly use this excuse for their fiction.

victim to all the delusions of Jacobinism.<sup>75</sup> This was an argument of surprising sophistication, since not only did it encompass the notion that all new philosophy was necessarily fallacious, ready to be dissipated by the first puff of genuine reason, but by justifying their fiction as having popular appeal, conservative novelists had managed to appropriate a well-rehearsed and long-standing criticism of novels and turn it into a justification for their own fictional sallies. Novels had been condemned for so long because they reached new and indiscriminating readers. Now they were being praised, or at least sanctioned, for it. Anti-Jacobin novels became necessary precisely because novels had been, and continued to be, so dangerous. What is more, the potency of fiction which had been so thoroughly execrated because of its alliance with vice, infidelity, and sedition, could now not merely be rehabilitated, but extolled as a positive virtue. Jacobin fiction may have been 'calculated, by its insinuating narrative and interesting description to fascinate the imagination without rousing the stronger energies of the mind,' according to West, but the same qualities could be used for anti-Jacobinism.<sup>76</sup> Not only would anti-Jacobin fiction provide a prophylactic against the evils contained in radical novels, reaching an audience not likely to turn to treatises for the illumination that could dispel the Jacobin fantasy, but it could proselytise, obtaining converts to a proactive conservatism with its own fascinating language and without having to engage the reader in a debate on the matter which might prove both off-putting and ill-advised. This realisation was fiction's reprieve.

Seen retrospectively then, the flowering of the anti-Jacobin novel seems to have proved Charlotte Smith correct in her assertion of 1792, that only 'those who object to the matter' of novels would 'arraign the manner, and exclaim against the impropriety of making a book of entertainment the vehicle of political discussion.'<sup>77</sup> In fact, long-term misgivings about politics in novels, whether on the part of novelists or their critics, did not suddenly vanish once the anti-Jacobin novel had begun to attempt its redemption. If West had quietly exulted over her appropriation of the very attributes of the novel which made it so dangerous, D'Israeli determinedly claimed to have chosen only 'the form rather than the matter of a novel' for his *Vaurien* (1797), although in fact he was either being modest, or exhibiting an understandable trepidation about what critics would make of his innovations.<sup>78</sup> In 1800, Hannah More

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<sup>75</sup> This constant contention was frequently figured as a straight contest between novels and sermons, with many a clerical novelist, rather artfully, professing that since no-one read sermons, fiction had to be attempted (e.g. Rev'd William Cole, *The Contradiction* [London, 1796], pp. iv-v). As Richard Graves put it in 1790, 'many a young nymph would read a moral tale, who would not listen to a sermon' (*Plexippus: or, the Aspiring Plebeian* [London, 1790], i, vii). On the other hand, many a satirist, more negatively, exhibited the rival attractions of novels and sermons, exposing members of congregations reading novels held inside a cover specially 'ornamented with religious emblems' whilst the clergyman delivered his moral exhortations. (William Combe, *The Devil Upon Two Sticks in England* [London, 1791], II, 83). For Dorcas Lackington, at least according to her husband James, there was no such conflict of interest: she divided all her spare hours between sermons and novels, spending her Sundays and evenings attending two or three 'Calvinist-Methodist preachers' and filling the gaps, and the remainder of the days, with 'Tales of Love and Maids forsaken'. Lackington, *The Confessions of J. Lackington* [London, 1804], pp. 1-2.

<sup>76</sup> West, *Tale of the Times*, III, 388.

<sup>77</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Desmond. A Novel* [London, 1792], 'Preface', I, iii.

<sup>78</sup> Isaac D'Israeli, *Vaurien: or, Sketches of the Times* [London, 1797], I, xvi.

was not the only author not yet ready to produce a novel, and she was still fully engaged with the controversialists at Blagdon. In 1805, Hugh Murray, himself an anti-Jacobin novelist with his *The Swiss Emigrants* of the previous year, still thought it necessary to write a carefully constructed defence of anti-Jacobin novels in a disquisition of his own, entitled *Morality of Fiction*. Conservative novels may 'perhaps be justified,' he opined, before rehashing all the by then conventional excuses, and resolutely concluding that the end - the routing of Jacobin fiction - justified the means, however distasteful they might be.<sup>79</sup>

The fact that Murray still felt it necessary to publish this disquisition as late as 1805 is revealing in another way too, suggesting that his defence of the anti-Jacobin novel was at heart as much a rhetorical device as a genuine response to a call to arms to fight Jacobinism's intrusion into fiction. 1805 was a full decade after the most ardently radical novel, *Caleb Williams*, had made its appearance, and by the turn of the century, the species was almost extinct. And yet, long after 1800, Murray's treatise and others like it, along with numerous prefaces such as those we have been examining continued to testify to the grave threat posed by radical fiction and the need to retaliate in kind. The preface to a novel was also the traditional site for an author's sycophantic attempts to propitiate the critics, and there must be a suspicion that some authors were emphasising the political mission of their fiction merely in the attempt to acquire a degree of respectability in excess of what they might otherwise have been able to hope for. So manifest was their deep ideological commitment, that it would be outrageous to suppose that the likes of More, West or Hamilton were jumping on an anti-Jacobin bandwagon merely for the chance it offered them to absolve their fiction's entrance into a public sphere. But as women, who felt they had an urgent political message to impart to the public but few opportunities to do so without violating their own, and others', sense of gender propriety, the Jacobin novel was an invaluable invitation into the literary *mêlée*. For novelists such as Smith and Walker, and perhaps Mary Robinson, all of whom had once produced basically Jacobin novels, the prospect of expiating their past crimes by the production of, as it turned out in the case of Walker and Smith, extraordinarily anti-Jacobin fiction must have been tempting indeed. It might not have wiped their slates entirely clean (as Mathias' treatment of Smith and Robinson shows), but at least it made them less vulnerable to renewed criticism of their politicisation of fiction. But it is with authors possessed of a very clear and pre-formed personal agenda that one cannot help feeling that the Jacobin novel was an excuse, and soon a cliché, frequently commandeered merely as a serviceable horse on which to ride into their own private battles. Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, say, prefaced the second edition of his novel *Arthur Fitz-Albini* (1799) with talk of a crisis in which 'the circulating libraries have inundated the kingdom with a flood of novels, by half-witted writers,' and a resolution that 'it seemed no useless task to attempt to stem this torrent of seduction', but, not put off his stride in the slightest, he then

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<sup>79</sup> Anti-Jacobin novels 'may perhaps be justified, even supposing us to form an unfavourable opinion of this mode of writing in general. The works against which they were directed, were written with great ability, and were addressed to a class of readers, who could not have attended to any other mode of refutation. It became necessary, therefore, to combat them with their own weapons, without inquiring very minutely how far those weapons were lawful.' Murray, *Morality of Fiction* [Edinburgh, 1805], p.151n.

got on with dealing with the same concerns that had dominated his life and works until then, and would continue to do so, that is to say his veneration for rank and loathing of new wealth.<sup>80</sup>

Whether genuinely felt, or designedly constructed, however, enmity towards Jacobin novels, and to fiction in general, remained an essential component of the anti-Jacobin novel long after its absolute dominance had been established. It was its *raison d'être* and its vindication, and it never forgot it. Thus the tendency to attack fiction within novels, which had seemed so hypocritical to Jane Austen and others continued unabated, increasing in vehemence indeed, in the conservative novels of the '90s and early 1800s. Austen had reproved novelists for their haughtily disdain of fiction, but anti-Jacobin novelists denounced novels for a specific purpose: to exonerate their own work by stressing the depravity of fiction, and particularly its inherent Jacobinism, even long after Jacobin novels, as such, had ceased to be produced.

Indeed, anti-Jacobinism transformed novel writing and novel reading into intrinsically Jacobin occupations. Henry James Pye, for instance, classified all modern fiction as guilty of what he called 'novellism', a crime possessed of a distinctly Jacobin tendency even though it did not advance an overtly radical agenda as Godwin and others had done. Pye explains it thus:

In fiction as well as reality, the age of chivalry is past; the sentimental philosopher takes the place of the warrior in the favour of the ladies; and, to quote the words of the ballad, 'the captain is no longer the charming man.' The hero of the modern tale must be always deprecating the glories of the field, and must brand with infamy the sword of patriotism, though it glows with the blood of those who draw theirs against everything most dear to him. ... As the hero grows sentimental, the heroine becomes manly; she strides the course, or bends the bow with the nerve of a Thalestris; and cursing, like Eloisa,

'All laws but those which love has made'

if the husband is disagreeable, inattentive, or absent though on service of his country, or in acquiring wealth for her, she is allowed to solace herself with some gentle youth, whom the hand of sensibility dresses out in the most bewitching garb, while insidious lust in the specious form of refined delicacy strews his false roses over the violated marriage-bed.<sup>81</sup>

And modern novels necessarily made Jacobins of their readers, whether, as propaganda, they actually preached Jacobinism, or whether they simply made their readers vulnerable to Jacobinism's subsequent attack by corroding the values that preserved them from corruption. Nowhere is this clearer than in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), really the memoirs of two novel-addicts, representatives of the reading public Hamilton wished to warn. These two female protagonists had been given free rein by their parents over the stock of nearby libraries. Bridgetina Botherim, having selected only novels and metaphysics for her entertainment, has, as a result, lapsed into new philosophy before the novel opens, but Hamilton does depict the fall of Julia Delmond for our instruction. Vallaton, a friend of

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<sup>80</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini. A Novel* [1798; 2nd edn., London, 1799], I, xiii.

<sup>81</sup> Pye, *Aristocrat*, I, 54-56.



Bridgetina and a Jacobin of the deepest dye, attempts her seduction in a way that perfectly combines Julia's novellism and his own new philosophy.<sup>82</sup> His attack was two-pronged, first appealing to his intended victim's love of novels, convincing her that he was a foundling, discovered in a monogrammed and lavish basket, and secondly undermining her piety, filial duty and chastity with his talk of reason, enlightenment and necessity. When she tells him that her father would not countenance their marriage, he tells her it is a tyrannical prejudice; when she discovers him to have been, in fact, an apprentice hairdresser, he tells her it may have been so, but only in homage to Rousseau's admiration for manual labour. And it is under this combined pressure that she eventually succumbs when she thinks her father about to force her to wed a Major Minden. This is the stuff of a thousand novels, as Hamilton's text itself makes clear with its references to *Clarissa*, but along with the attack on novellism, we clearly see the effect of Vallaton's new philosophy:

Thus was she on the eve of one of those cruel persecutions with which so many heroines have been tormented. Often, indeed, had she wondered at having escaped so very common a calamity for such a length of time; and often in the imagination had she approved of the spirit with which she was resolved to act upon such an occasion. Already did she behold Major Minden, with the determined and selfish obstinacy of the hateful Solmes, persisting in seizing her reluctant hand; while her father, with all the cruelty of all the Harlowes, attempted to force her to the hateful union. But never, (she resolved) never would she disgrace the principles she had adopted, by a base submission to the will of an arbitrary tyrant. Her fate was cruel but it was not unexampled.<sup>83</sup>

For Hamilton, novels and new philosophy had the same effect, and when combined together proved all too lethal. Most importantly, such a conception of modern fiction demanded, and continued to demand, the sort of anti-Jacobin novels which were published long after Jacobinism itself, and the Jacobin novel, had been extinguished. The anti-Jacobin novel was the product of the traditional contempt for novels every bit as much as of the more historically specific contempt for Jacobinism. By the late 1790s, however, they were tantamount to the same thing.

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<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* [1800; 2nd edn., London, 1800], III, 346.

<sup>83</sup> Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, I, 91-97, 164-66 and 305-308; II, 264-65. Once she had fallen prey to Vallaton's machinations, Julia's fate came swiftly. He beguiled her from her home, abandoned her in London, left her to penury, imprisonment, attempted suicide and (almost) prostitution, followed by the repentance of her folly, and a salutary death. Compare the almost identical methods of another disciple of the new philosophy, at least as far as it served his own ends, 'Augustus Clinton', alias Benjamin Potter, a servant, but only, he claimed, so as to gain admission to the fair Charlotte, in the anonymous *History of Sir George Warrington* [London, 1797]. Potter's invention of a name 'too consonant to her ideas not to have their desired effect' and threat to throw himself in the lake if she refused him, only confirmed his story of supporting a servant's rôle only to be near her, for as he knew, her only amusement was the reading of novels. She had 'often heard and read, of gentlemen going in disguise to obtain the first wish of their hearts', which in his case turned out to be her £10,000, a sum which would suit his conception of the levelling principle by putting him, after his trip to Gretna, on a level with anyone (I, 123-24, 107 and 119). Much the same technique is used by the Jacobin Mr Sidney in Bisset's *Douglas*: 'The Circulating Library, was, however, of great assistance to me.... I put into her hand the novels that teach that, what is called female frailty, is not, in the least, inconsistent with every good quality; and also those others which inflame the mind with pictures of the exquisite pleasures of hidden love. In short, - what with Mrs. Wollstonecroft's [sic] divine work, and the *sweet sentimental effusions of female novelists*, softening the alleged evil ... we obeyed the laws of nature, without the absurd formality of tyrannic institution.' Bisset, *Douglas*, III, 86-87.



### 3: Representing Revolution

'Go, Englishman, and tell your countrymen the things that thou hast witnessed. Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. How then shall men describe? Let example speak what precept would fail to enforce, and may the misfortunes of this hapless pair prevent the misfortunes of others.'

- Edward Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaide, a Moral Tale. In which are exhibited the Effects of the Late French Revolution on the Peasantry of France* (1791)

'I own the King's situation must be interesting, horribly interesting, but it is an interest that pervades the globe, and I believe few bosoms in Paris have more lively feelings on the subject than it excites in those of England.'

- R. C. Dallas, *Percival, or Nature Vindicated. A Novel* (1801)

Having fallen on the sort of hard times which any self-respecting hero ought to expect, the eponymous protagonist of Charlotte Smith's *Marchmont* (1796) decides to write a novel. One would not have expected this to be too difficult a task for a creature of such exquisite sensibility, but, autobiographical as ever, Smith uses the occasion to confide to us the dilemma of the modern novelist. *Marchmont* wants incident for his tale, but all conceivable stories had already been written and he was reluctant to borrow. Outrageously improbable events disgusted him, whilst the daily occurrences of life would bore the reader. He would be accused of 'egotism' were his hero to be a poor, lonely, romantic wanderer, yet if he were made too prosperous no-one would care about his fate; if the hero was too perfect the author would be criticised for creating a faultless monster, yet if too prone to error, he would be censured for giving youth a pernicious example to follow. He could not even base his protagonists on real people, for this was also an actionable offence at the tribunal of the critics. But *Marchmont* suddenly hits upon what seems the perfect solution to his predicament: 'I turned my eyes to the scenes that were passing almost before them,' he records, 'and thought by relating without much addition from fiction some of the many events that were passing in private life in a neighbouring country, that I might unite interest with truth' - in other words, a novel of the French Revolution. But by 1796, having already produced two such works, Smith knew better: it was, she lamented, a delusive prospect. Time and distance were required, *Marchmont* was to learn, to soften real life, and, it being impossible to bring forward events without touching on their causes, some political discussion would inevitable ensue, which, 'however liberal or applicable, was not to be tolerated in a sort of work which people took up with no other design than to be amused at the least possible expense of thought.'<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Smith's understanding of the novel in the 1790s was second to

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont: A Novel* [London, 1796], II, 226-29.

none, but on this occasion she would be proved to be in error. In fact, her own two novels of the Revolution, *Desmond* (1792) and *The Banished Man* (1794), on which, presumably, she was basing this judgement, had received largely favourable reviews as well as public success. But they were to be only some of the first of many novels of the French Revolution. It was a genre that was to flourish even as the Revolution played itself out, that was to burgeon precisely because of the 'applicable' political tendency that Smith worried about. Tales of two cities were a common occurrence in the 1790s and 1800s, and far from softening the Revolution by time and distance, they thrived on their immediacy.

Representing revolution was, after all, the most straight-forward means of infusing an ideological purpose into fiction. That we tend to think of the ideological novel of the '90s as a novel of *ideas* is simply the residue of the over-emphasis on Jacobin novels in the literary response to the Revolution. When Edmund Burke wished to execrate recent events in France, even before events there turned irredeemably vicious, he chose a pseudo-fictional form which, in large part, depicted, rather than reasoned, the Revolution. It was a decision for which he was roundly ridiculed by his opponents, but the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was nevertheless hugely popular, as well as successful in its polemical aims, and it probably influenced numerous novelists.<sup>2</sup> Many quickly realised that a narrative provided the scope to illustrate a philosophy from its origins, through its progress, to its effects, and to cover protagonists in satirical contempt, or glowing eulogy, according to their opinions, and that the depiction of Revolution offered the perfect opportunity to use plot and character to their maximum effect. Even those authors not attempting didactic fiction could benefit, the Revolution providing their fiction with a contemporaneity and weightiness that, despite Marchmont's fears, could make a claim for an increased regard for a novel, so often regarded as the least worthy of literary forms.

This is not to say that novelists of the '90s and 1800s all felt obliged to slot the Revolution into their fiction. Some even went so far as pointedly to set their plots in an apparently contemporary France, but without a revolution, a political statement in itself of course, although it is stretching a point to suggest that such a decision necessarily constituted a deliberate and thought-through anti-Jacobin stance as at least one commentator has done.<sup>3</sup> The anonymous author of *The Invasion; or, What Might Have Been* of 1798

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance Francis Stone, *An Examination of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France...* [London, 1792], who recounts how a 'fantastical, giddy-brained, and foolish' young female friend, with 'an irresistible penchant for romances and novels,' could not rest until she had bought Burke's work, so fashionable had it become. Preparing to read it, she says, 'I at once dropped all my light airs, and prepared myself with much mental gravity for the slow, quiet perusal of a work, which I apprehended would abound with much close reasoning, and deep philosophic theory. But, to my astonishment, I no sooner entered on the perusal, that I found it to be a mere romance, a poem in prose, or an undefinable whip-syllabub declamation, which amused my imagination instead of informing and improving my judgement' (pp.140-41).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Meeke's tale of a contemporary France still dominated by monarchy and aristocracy, *Count St. Blancard, or, the Prejudiced Judge, A Novel* [1795; rpt. New York, 1977], for instance, has prompted John Garrett to assert that 'Mrs. Meeke's conservatism was based on a belief that the 1789 revolution was some sort of aberration of history' ('Introduction', I, xv). See also *The Bastille. Or the History of Charles Townley* [London, 1789] which was renamed *The Memoirs of Charles Townley. Written by Himself* for its Dublin edition of 1789, presumably after news of the Revolution broke, although it retained its depiction of *ancien régime* France; and the anonymous *Chateau de Myrelle, or Laura* [London, 1791], set in a 'contemporary' France with an awareness of the issues of the Revolution apparent in comparisons of a British king who regards 'his subjects as fellow participants in the rights of humanity' and a French monarch who sees them as 'slaves to his imperative will' (p.86). Yet glowing descriptions of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI make no mention whatsoever of any recent change in their circumstances.

could even write a novel dealing with the invasion of southern England by a nameless foreign power in an unspecified present without the least indication of an awareness of any contemporary relevance, let alone the inclusion of any lurking didacticism. But even if not deliberately disingenuous, it was certainly naïve for a novelist to expect to deal with these kinds of subjects - an invasion, a mob, the storming of a gaol, the fall of a cruel despot - without inciting a recognition of contemporary events amongst the novel's readers. And before such novels are allowed to undermine our notions of an all-pervasive Revolution crisis, it should be made clear that this kind of nonchalant novel was the exception. Indeed, this kind of idiosyncrasy rather highlights the fascination of the majority of novelists with the Revolution, or rather with revolution in general and with riot or invasion too, whether in France, Britain, the abstract, or the traditional geographical and historical no-places of so much fiction. Quite apart from anything else, the turmoil of a revolution or war, as both Smith and the author of *The Invasion* had noticed, provided a perfect setting for the adventures of a daring hero or the tribulations of persecuted lovers. The Revolution itself, as Burke's luxuriously gothic description of Marie Antoinette's adventures in his *Reflections* had amply demonstrated, was made for the novelist, being already replete with a full cast of brave heroes, susceptible heroines, and dastardly villains. The French Revolution, as E. J. Clery has recently emphasised, was itself 'being written, and consumed by a paranoid British public, like a gripping romance translated from the German', and despite Marchmont's wariness, those novelists who ignored the Revolution were passing up a glorious opportunity.<sup>4</sup> That many did not let this chance pass them by meant that, to refine Clery's contention, a large number of novel-reading Britons were also reading the Revolution actually *in* a novel (gripping or not).

Yet the question of why it was that authors were inserting the Revolution into their fiction must remain. Was it a genuine and considered anti-Jacobinism, or was it a desire to imbue their novels with the manifold advantages - a certain contemporaneity, a ready-made wardrobe of elegant, gallant, and gothic clothes - that put the Revolution into the novel? Were these representations of revolution propaganda, or, if they were written as much as ten or twenty years after the events that they were describing, must they be considered 'historical novels', in the same class as those of Scott or Dickens, a connection which at least one scholar has made?<sup>5</sup> This is a question to which I shall be returning at the end of the chapter. Before that, I shall give a general outline of the ways in which, and the purposes for which, revolution - both of the 'real' French (and Irish) variety, and its more abstract analogues - was used in fiction. Through this, the nature of the relationship between representation and didacticism may begin to become a little more distinct.

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<sup>4</sup> E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* [Cambridge, 1995], p.172.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney. The Life in the Works* [New Brunswick, N.J., 1988], p.318: 'The modern historical novel, as Scott was to develop it, is really an offspring of those novels of the French Revolution and of the Revolutionary era.'

## 1 Depicting Revolution

Even if the representation of the French Revolution was not always used for a deliberately anti-Jacobin purpose, it was certainly not a weapon that British Jacobin novelists chose to take up to any significant extent. Their determination to show things as they were, with the implication that things were not (yet) as they ought to be, was limited very much to Britain, a policy which made sense, since Godwin, Holcroft and others were ostensibly pointing out the abuses of the British *ancien régime*, rather than their 'post-revolutionary' emendation, which they might conceivably have claimed to have been achieved in France. Of course, as the Revolution descended into Terror, its portrait, however well drawn, would not have helped the radical cause in Britain a great deal anyway, and the best of Jacobin fiction was not to be written until after the guillotine, the regicide, and the outbreak of war between Britain and France had rendered approval of the continuing Revolution almost unthinkable. Yet even before these developments, while there could still be a debate on the Revolution, in that strange lacuna between Burke's *Reflections* and the events of 1792-93 which would appear to prove him a prophet of remarkable accuracy, it is rather surprising that the representation of the Revolution was not chosen as a battleground on which to contest the issues. It was after all, debatable land, reports from France varying enormously, a situation which seemed made for fiction to step in and shape perceptions of the Revolution.

Charlotte Smith's *Desmond* of 1792 is just the kind of novel one would expect to have been written by many more supporters of the Revolution before about 1793 - an exercise in literary radicalism attempting to vindicate French feats of liberty by depicting them in all their glory.<sup>6</sup> It gives a favourable, and reasonably factual, description of the Revolution as seen by a hero attempting to submerge his love for a married woman in the 'new dawn' across the Channel, his enthusiasm only slightly tempered by the caution of his correspondent in Britain. But Smith deliberately shied away from the sort of polemical fiction which she might so easily have produced, striving to depict the objective reality of what was happening in France, not to make any ideological or propagandistic point. Her well-known preface avowed as much, claiming that she had not attempted to argue in favour of any one party in the novel but had sought to represent accurately the Revolution and the debate surrounding it, and if the veracity of this statement seems somewhat doubtful, her depictions of the Revolution do actually support the claim. They are not really fictionalised, and they are not polemical, or at least not *very* polemical, but have the genuine character of letters from an eyewitness in Paris, written to disabuse misled Britons. 'I can now... assure you,' writes Desmond in a letter dated 14 July 1790, the day of the Champ-de-Mars festival,

that nothing is more unlike the real state of this country, than the accounts which have been given of it in England: and that the sanguinary and ferocious democracy, the scenes of anarchy and confusion, which we have had so pathetically described and

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<sup>6</sup> Novels of *Desmond's* era depicting the Revolution are few and far between. Helen Maria William's *Julia, a Novel* [London, 1790], though set in the 1770s, may perhaps just be counted, a poem inserted into the text, 'The Bastille, A Vision', purporting to be a vision of one of its prisoners, prophesying the fall of its walls by some as yet unknown force (II, 218-23).

lamented, have no existence but in the malignant fabrications of those who have been paid for their misrepresentations.<sup>7</sup>

What is clear is that Smith was attempting to seize the moral high ground, claiming that she was dealing only with truth whilst others - the fanatical enemies of the Revolution whom she claims have been paying to have events in France misrepresented - are forced to fictionalise that which they wish to condemn. It was doubtless this same faith in the power of truth, and distrust of falsification, that convinced other radically-inclined authors not to attempt vindictory fictionalised representations of the Revolution either.

This reluctance is in marked contrast to the anti-Jacobins, for Smith's claim that there were 'malignant fabrications' abroad was far from being merely empty rhetoric. Edward Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaide*, of a year earlier, was surely one of them, and does provide, in contrast with *Desmond*, the first appearance of a rival strain of Revolution fiction. There is no hard evidence to suggest that Smith was specifically referring to Sayer's novel when she made her accusation, but it is still illuminating that *Lindor and Adelaide* professed to depict the France of late July and early August 1790, just as this particular section of *Desmond* had been doing, and that Sayer's novel revolves around a special day of ceremony and celebration of the Revolution in the village of Ermonville, a sort of rural Feast of the Federation. Whilst Smith had depicted real events, which she had obviously researched with some care, Sayer uses imaginary incidents to fulfil his purpose, and a very obvious purpose it is. The festivities quickly plunge into violence and riot, our hero is killed by the mob, our heroine is insulted by their leader, and soon dies having heard the lone villager, faithful to the memory of the kind aristocrats, tell the tale of the outrages of the mob. As if impelled by some terrible force, the mob had converged on the chateau, and in his description Sayer provides one of the best, as well as the earliest, portraits of the revolutionary crowd:

When arrived we found a great multitude already assembled and committing every possible excess. Their riot increased with their numbers, and distorting themselves with various noises and notions, they were soon spread over every part of the ground that surrounded the house. At last, they seemed as if by mutual consent, or the command of some superior, to gather close together before the great gates. Many women and children were then seen hurrying out of the house, each bearing in their arms a part of the furniture, tables, chairs and any thing that could be moved. Just at that moment, a flame burst forth out of two of the lower windows towards the left; at the sight of which, the people sent forth a hideous shout of acclamation. Some calling out, Perish the aristocrats! While others screamed aloud, *Vive la Nation, Vive la Nation....*<sup>8</sup>

In certain respects, Sayer was claiming to depict accurately events in France - a note maintains that 'the Author has endeavoured throughout, to adhere as strictly as possible to French names and manners of expression' - but the sources for his history, though we cannot be sure of course, seem to come more from

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<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Desmond. A Novel* [London, 1792], I, iii and 105. Desmond is apparently speaking of the Feast of the Federation, a peaceful celebration of the Revolution's successes that took place at the Champs de Mars on 14 July 1790. From his complaint, though, it seems likely that Smith was confusing this with the massacre at the Champs de Mars, which followed the next anniversary of the Bastille's fall in July 1791.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaide, a Moral Tale. In which are exhibited the Effects of the Late French Revolution on the Peasantry of France* [London, 1791], pp.323-35.



his imagination than any creditable account - in exactly the same way as Burke, Sayer's stated model, had furnished his *Reflections* with fictionalised illustrations. Thus Sayer provides us with the story of the late Lieutenant Governor of Marseilles, 'lately torn to pieces by the mob', not as a recorded fact, but as an anecdote related by an English visitor who happens to wander into Ermonville, and who, having dined with the Lieutenant Governor the night before, rose the next morning to see 'the head of my friend, streaming with blood and disfigured by blows, borne upon a pole and carried in barbarous triumph by a long train of furious and insolent rabble.'<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, it was Sayer's method of representation that was to win out over the sort of event-based understanding, and depiction, of the Revolution that Smith purported to present. Sayer's representations, though, were severely limited by his willingness to admit that he was openly writing fiction with a purpose, that the novel he was producing was essentially propaganda. Though anonymous, Sayer proudly announced the novel to be 'By the Author of "Observations on Doctor Price's Revolution Sermon"' and used his 'Advertisement' to recommend Burke's great work - the *Reflections* - of which his own novel, he said, could only be a pale imitation. Moreover, he filled his narrative with long disquisitions, much longer than his *Observations* in fact, supposedly given in character, but so obviously out of keeping with the form that he was using, that he felt obliged to offer apologies for at least some of them. 'Prepare yourselves' - says the venerable Prieur to our protagonists (and us readers), before launching into one particularly tightly-argued 85 page essay on the evils of the Revolution, the adequacy of the French *ancien régime* and the perfection of the British constitution - prepare yourselves 'for a discourse of some length, and of some nicety, but I trust not unworthy of your attention, nor impossible to understand.'<sup>10</sup> This sort of gauche didactic fiction could surely not have been particularly effective. Its explicit propagandising is condescending and alienating, and one can almost sense a ghostly feeling of disappointment clinging to the book from all the readers who felt betrayed into such dull political precepts by a novel with such an alluring title as *Lindor and Adelaïde*. There were certainly many more thrills in Burke's *Reflections*.

The way that this clumsiness was overcome, and the way the real achievement of anti-Jacobin fiction's representations of revolution was arrived at, was by the mating of the methods of Sayer and Smith. *Desmond's* apparent historicity was the perfect antidote to Sayer's sententiousness, its supposed objectivity the perfect corrective to his condescension. What made it the obvious way forward for those seeking to write anti-Jacobin fiction, though, was probably not any conscious emulation of Smith, but rather the change in the course of events in France.

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<sup>9</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, pp.21n, vi-vii and 309-310.

<sup>10</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, pp.vii and 92. A further blow to the integrity of the fiction is given when Sayer unashamedly informs us that 'the Editor has chosen to omit those interruptions which broke the tediousness of the disquisition when delivered, and although at the hazard of fatiguing the reader, has thought it best to present him with it in its continued state, free from those explanations which might be necessary for Lindor and Adelaïde, but which he expects can hardly be deemed so for those into whose hands this moral tale my chance to fall' (p.93n.).

Smith, for her part, had been still sticking to her empirical analysis of the Revolution, her *Banished Man* of two years after *Desmond* being written on the same principles. It was certainly a recantation of sorts, but accompanied by none of the retrospective reevaluation of old convictions indulged in by, say, Coleridge, and the change in her opinions was manifestly still as a result of *events* in France in 1792 and 1793, events which obliterated the promise of the early Revolution.<sup>11</sup> 'Englishmen must execrate the abuse of the name of liberty which has followed;' she wrote in July 1794, they must have had their opinions changed by events, having contemplated

with mingled horror and pity, a people driven by terror to commit enormities which in the course of a few months have been more destructive than the despotism of ages - a people who, in place of a mild and well-meaning monarch, have given themselves up to the tyranny of monsters, compared with whom Nero and Caligula are hardly objects of abhorrence.<sup>12</sup>

Even such a comprehensive statement as this of a personal revolution in the estimation of the Revolution causes little surprise since it was undergone by such a substantial portion of that part of the British population that took an interest in affairs across the Channel. As Clara Reeve was insisting a year earlier in 1793, interjecting some contemporary 'further remarks on the untimely death of princes' into her tale of the fourteenth century, the *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, 'the impartial and unprejudiced part of mankind, will draw the line of distinction between those men who effected the revolution, and framed the first constitution; and those who overturned it, and trampled upon all laws, divine and human.'<sup>13</sup> Once this condemnation could be assumed, objectivity was something to be wholeheartedly welcomed by anti-Jacobin novelists, and by the mid-'90s the Revolution was indeed no longer debatable ground, one report competing with another to answer the question of whether it should be welcomed or not, but a battlefield already taken. The events of 1792-94 in France proved only one thing: the iniquity of the Revolution. Thus the ostensible impartiality of Smith, who attempted to convince her readers that she was relying only on reported facts, could, because it was so confidently preordained, be added to representations of the Revolution like those of Sayer, who had openly fictionalised the subject. Future anti-Jacobin novels would continue with Sayer's technique of fictional representation, but would court at least the appearance of candid and objective description for it played into their hands to do so.

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<sup>11</sup> Compare Smith in 1794: 'if I had been convinced I was in error in regard to what I formerly wrote on the politics of France, I should without hesitation avow it. I still think, however, that no native of England could help *then* rejoicing at the possibility there was that the French nation would obtain, with very little bloodshed, that degree of freedom which we have been taught to value so highly' (*Banished Man* [London, 1794], I, x-xi), with Coleridge after the French invasion of Switzerland, 1798: 'forgive me, that I cherished/ One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes!' ('France: An Ode', lines 70-71).

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Banished Man*, 'Preface', I, x-xi. Smith's intermediate novel, *The Old Manor House* [London, 1793], exhibits a mid-way stop on what seems the smooth transition between the pro-Revolutionary sentiments of *Desmond* and the anti-Jacobinism of *Banished Man*. This movement towards the latter is again demonstrably determined by 'the *events* of the past Summer (*events* terrible enough God knows!)', whilst the former faith was not quite annihilated because of the recognition that all important historical processes, even those in which Britain is involved, will always be accompanied by *events* of cruelty which even 'exceed any thing that happened on the 10th of August, the 2d September, or at any one period of the execrated Revolution in France' (*Old Manor House* [1793; rpt. Oxford, 1989, ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis, p.360n. My emphasis.]).

<sup>13</sup> Clara Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* [London, 1793], III, 216 and 224.

Understandably, anti-Jacobin novels themselves delighted in chronicling the descent from a Revolution which had at first augured well, seeming to aspire only to the perfections of the British constitution, into a perversion of itself that self-evidently proved its own transgression. Henry James Pye, for instance, could not resist interjecting a rather gloating, and absolutely confident, retrospective assertion of what he regarded as France's irredeemable iniquity into his account of the fond hopes for a period of harmonious Anglo-French cooperation expressed by his protagonists in the France of 1791. It was an 'Amiable and pardonable error!' admitted Pye, and one, 'which then occupied many a virtuous and many a patriotic mind'. But, as Reeve had said as early as 1793, it was surely an error into which none could fall by 1799, the year of *The Aristocrat's* publication. It was self-evident that all such hopes had been 'so cruelly frustrated by the excesses of the most sanguinary people on earth, which have done more to check the progress of real morality and sound philosophy than all the united efforts of bigotry and despotism recorded in the annals of mankind.'<sup>14</sup> John Moore, author of one of the best known, and not wholly unsympathetic, accounts of the early Revolution, in his novel *Mordaunt* (1800), was even more explicit about the way in which this events-driven disenchantment made support for France not just impolitic but impossible, eradicating even long-held radical opinions: -

Their cruelty to the king and royal family shocked the hearts of all humane republicans, and roused a spirit of loyalty, which for some years preceding the French Revolution seemed rather benumbed all over Europe.... The democratic bias, which had been gaining ground, was by the tyrannical and rapacious conduct of the French, checked in all the countries of Europe, particularly in Great-Britain. The very chimney-sweeps in London have become aristocrats, from their hatred to their brethren the blackguards and sans-culottes of Paris.<sup>15</sup>

How these chimney-sweeps gained their putative knowledge of the Revolution is a matter of some interest to the historian. Presumably, unlike Pye's protagonist, Sir Edward, and Moore's Honourable John Mordaunt, they, as with most Britons, had not had the opportunity to travel through France and observe the Revolution at first hand. Like most Britons, the chimney-sweeps relied, in other words, on representations of revolution, perhaps of the representations of novelists every bit as much as journalists or returning travellers, representations which, from *Desmond* and *Lindor and Adelaïde* onwards, many novelists evidently believed could best be achieved by sending a character or two off to see France for themselves.

But even more illuminating of the almost magical power of just the merest glimpse of the Revolution to banish folly and inspire wisdom in the onlooker are the attempts of various British Jacobin characters to prevent their dupes from witnessing anything happening in France for themselves. Thus, the new philosophers who ensnare the political quixote in *The History of Sir George Warrington* (1797) are ever mindful of the need not only to hide their own typically licentious and avaricious motives, but also 'as

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<sup>14</sup> Henry James Pye, *The Aristocrat. A Novel* [London, 1799], I, 38.

<sup>15</sup> Moore, *Mordaunt. Sketches of Life, Characters, and Manners, in Various Countries...* [London, 1800], I, 66-67.

much as possible the horrible consequences which had ensued, and would still ensue, from the French Revolution.' And whilst they argue our hero out of his proposed trip to France (depriving us of another depiction of the horrors of the Revolution), for they were 'too sensible that at this period the waters of the Seine ... had a powerful effect in curbing the republican mania when it attacked Englishmen', we see his true friends attempting to lift the veil from his eyes by putting in his way the newspapers of the day and all 'those publications they thought most proper for their plan'.<sup>16</sup>

If newspapers very speedily effected the reformation of George Warrington, the political quixote, the light of truth suddenly bursting in upon him, for most other characters inhabiting the sort of novel whose plan did not include a lengthy tour of France, letters from correspondents witnessing unfolding events across the Channel served just as well, if not better, for the enlightenment of protagonists and readers alike. It was not a new technique, of course, the advantages of the epistolary novel for depicting snippets of a complex picture without the necessity of a thorough description or explanation were well known and easy to use. It took no great ingenuity on the part of an author to send an expendable character or two off to France, have one of them be 'seized by the sbirri of Robespierre's party' perhaps, and the other send a letter home bearing the news from Paris 'of the poor fellow's having paid the forfeit of his life, for daring to speak sincerely of the sanguinary party, which after spilling the blood of the too inoffensive Louis, can have no compunction in wading through that of every Frenchman who was attached to him'.<sup>17</sup> Often, though, these letters did not form part of an overall epistolary scheme, as they had in *Percival*, *Mordaunt* and *Desmond*, but were isolated nuggets of anti-Jacobinism, often rather awkwardly inserted, giving the recipients of the letter a pre-packaged and very succinct 'knowledge' of the Revolution. A letter from Marchmont, in Smith's novel, who has been packed off to France on the pretext of escaping his persecutors and meeting up with a distant relative (which is to say that he has been sent there to allow Smith another opportunity to rewrite her opinion of the Revolution), informs his mother, sisters and fiancée, awaiting his return, of the 'scene of phrenzy and of horrors' witnessed in Paris, and of the folly and the ferocity of the people, which excite his contempt and abhorrence respectively.<sup>18</sup> What do the women, sitting at home, make of it? Very little, for they blithely accept Marchmont's account, shake their heads in sorrow, and congratulate each other on being British. One cannot help but suspect that in doing so they were representing what, according to the novelists, was exactly the right sort of reaction to the Revolution, expected of readers of the novels as much as readers of the letters. Indeed, Marchmont's womenfolk might well be seen as representing the stereotypical class of novel-readers in the '90s - genteel, educated and refined, of moderate wealth, and with the lace-making business in fashionable Margate they have just established putting them almost on a par with the proverbially novel-reading milliners. We

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<sup>16</sup> Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington* [London, 1797], II, 123 and III, 62.

<sup>17</sup> R. C. Dallas, *Percival, or Nature Vindicated* (1801), in *Miscellaneous Works and Novels of R. C. Dallas, Esq.* [London, 1813], III, 174, 177-78.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Marchmont*, III, 176-77 and 185.

novel-readers, like the recipients of the letter, are told, in simple terms, exactly what we need to know, and no more, and the Revolution is distilled into comprehensibility.

Take, for instance, a letter received by Charlotte de Cordet bearing news from Paris in Helen Craik's novel *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800). The purpose of our narrator in detailing the contents of the letter, of having it sent in the first place, has little to do with the plot, but edifies both Charlotte and the reader of the novel simultaneously. It contained, we are informed, 'a very frightful description,' - too frightful to be vouchsafed verbatim it seems, and thus another displacing layer is inserted between the events and their reception - 'of the anarchy which prevailed, and the atrocities that were committed in the metropolis' and of 'the sanguinary proceedings of the bloody Robespierre [*sic*] and the no less infamous Marat', who 'were perpetually sounding the tocsin to devastation and murder' and encouraging 'the most impious ceremonies, and the actual practice of every vice under the face of Heaven!'<sup>19</sup> Charlotte's response to the letter is not recorded (although it would be less than a volume before she would get round to assassinating Marat), but if we wish to know how a recipient of such a letter was expected to react, we need only turn to Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron* (1795?) and Miss Hamilton's observably 'female' comments, full of novelish sensibility. 'How often am I astonished at being told,' she says, presumably meaning by those returning from having seen the Revolution (which happens a good deal in the novel),

that so many obdurate Hearts, so many savage and barbarous Hands, could be found in one City! But O! when one figures to the Imagination the various Sufferings of the unhappy Victims, as well as the complicated Woes of their surviving Friends, what awful Thoughts does it excite! And yet, Sophia, there are People who speak highly of the French Revolution.<sup>20</sup>

In effect, our response has been controlled through the response of our representative reader of the Revolution in the narrative. Thomas has led the reader of her novel quickly and firmly from a picture of the Revolution to an opinion of it, prescribing the correct response to reports of the Revolution so that any response not fitting the template which her character supplies becomes almost inconceivable, and certainly so for any reader aiming to emulate the sort of sensibility and refinement exhibited by her heroines.

J. M. S. Tompkins has pointed out that in Charlotte Smith's treatment of the French Revolution 'it is chiefly suffering, deprivation and exile, which attracts her', and it is an observation that applies equally to almost every other anti-Jacobin author too.<sup>21</sup> This is a representational strategy which essentially writes the reader (whether inside or outside the fiction) out of the need for, and even possibility of, an individual response. The Revolution is cut and dried, the suffering, deprivation and exile it causes allowing only one response - a revulsion so deep that it denies the possibility of debate. Although this may be usefully analysed as a literary strategy, it is also a reflection of the 'real' historical debate going on outside fiction in

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<sup>19</sup> Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet* [London, 1800], III, 148.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel. Founded on the French Revolution* [Plymouth, 1795?], I, 147-48.

<sup>21</sup> J. M. S. Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England 1770-1800* [London, 1932], p.135n.



1792-94, the debate that British radicalism would lose with the knock-out blow delivered by Robespierre, the Terror, the Edict of Fraternity, and the outbreak of war, and of which Smith's 1794 literary recantation was a symptom. The most memorable passages of her *Banished Man* are those in which her émigré hero, D'Alonville, returns to France and wanders amongst the desecration, witnessing scenes of carnage, wilful destruction, the dead lying unburied and the population almost all unhappy and half starved - the same unanswerable arguments, in other words, that were winning the actual debate.<sup>22</sup>

Smith was depicting events of late 1792 and 1793, a year or so before the novel was written (the preface is dated July '94), but scarcely enough to make *The Banished Man* an historical novel. But the same cannot be said of those anti-Jacobin novels which would continue to depict the same Revolutionary tableaux over the following ten or so years. Well over a dozen novels, of virtually every year of the decade from 1794, were all set squarely in the midst of events in France of 1792 to 1794, so that they form a seemingly seamless sequence with those novels which absolutely must be regarded as falling into the genre of 'historical novels', written after Waterloo and throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> This obvious fascination perfectly demonstrates how important these events had become in formulating not only the conservative, but the literary, response to the Revolution. But, in fact, what we see is a bundle of prepackaged incidents of the Revolution becoming far more important for what they signified than what they actually were. Events became emblems, and even without adopting a semiotic approach it must soon become obvious that the Revolution in the later '90s came to be represented in terms only of a series of powerful and only loosely historically accurate tropes, which both separately and together epitomised and represented the iniquity into which France had fallen.

Of course, the practice of depicting the Revolution purely in rather a-historical signifiers was not new, and Ronald Paulson has admirably shown Burke to have been the master of the technique, most famously with the *Reflections*' fundamentally fictional treatment of the Parisian mob's assault on Marie-Antoinette on 6 October 1789.<sup>24</sup> Amongst many other incidents, novelists were quick to employ very similar synecdoches similar to those of Burke. In Mary Charlton's *Parisian* of 1794, for instance, the subtitle of which proclaimed it to be comprised of *Genuine Anecdotes of Distinguished and Noble Characters*, there is an episode which tells us all we need to know about the Revolution in which we see a French mob surrounding a delicate and defenceless heroine. In one phrase, our narrator establishes the

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<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Banished Man*, III, 73-171, 195-224 and IV, 1-17.

<sup>23</sup> If there does exist a cut-off point at which novels dealing with the Revolution suddenly become 'historical', it may well, rather paradoxically, be determined by the extent to which authors were striving for an objective accuracy in their fiction, by the amount of research into their setting they deemed it necessary to undertake. Thus the novelists of the period before, say, 1810 or 1815, who apparently used no sources for their work, but relied on their own and their audience's rather vague knowledge of current affairs are separated from the likes of Dickens, who evidently felt himself unable to count on this cognizance, although very occasionally, anti-Jacobin novelists do cite references for their portrayal of the Revolution, e.g. Craik citing 'Moore's Journal' or 'Miss [Helen Maria] William's Letters', *Adelaide de Narbonne*, I, 86 and IV, 282n.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* [New Haven, 1983], pp.60-63. See also James T. Boulton's analysis of the 'apostrophe' to Marie Antoinette in *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* [London, 1963], pp.127-32.

Revolution as everything that persecutes the innocence and loveliness to whose charms it is insensible. 'Her beauty and extreme youth moved a few who were near her, to something resembling compassion, or her death would have been instantaneous', we are told, before seeing the mob drag her off to an interrogation 'which was meant to be a form of trial', but at which the sentence of death would certainly have been pronounced had not our hero appeared in the nick of time to effect a rescue.<sup>25</sup>

If the persecution of beautiful innocence was perhaps the most obvious trope running throughout the novels, portrayals of revolutionary 'justice' at work were only slightly less incessant and insistent. Whilst Charlton had shown the mob about to enact their 'form of trial' on her heroine, it was the revolutionary tribunal that was more usually seen visiting its brand of justice on an innocent victim. Both Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne* and Moore's *Mordaunt*, for example, dealt with the juridical persecutions inflicted on Princess Elizabeth, Louis XVI's sister - a sort of surrogate Marie Antoinette - Moore producing a wonderful description, both touching and grimly comic, of the tribunal in action. The scene is recounted by 'la Marquise', whose account of her own persecution fills up much of one of the novel's volumes. She finds her former dancing-master on the tribunal, a man so asinine that, despite his power, the Marquise's mother cannot help but ironically mock his judgments:

'And the princess Elizabeth!' exclaimed my mother - 'she was also a bloody-minded tyrant - Was she not?'

The commissioners stared.

'Or, what was her crime?' resumed my mother, with an animation of look approaching to wildness.

The commissioner looked first at one, then at the other, of his brethren.

He who had spoken last said that 'Elizabeth was certainly suspected of being an enemy to the revolution.'

'She certainly was,' added the chief commissioner.' And then looking to the dancing master, he added - 'Did you not tell me, brother, that one who attended the Temple informed you that he had overheard her praying very fervently, and that her prayers were anti-revolutionary?'

'It was you that said that they were anti-revolutionary,' replied the dancing-master. - 'I only told you that the man had said that she was overheard praying for the *reformation* of the king's enemies.'

The two commissioners looked at each other without speaking.

The person who sat at the bottom of the table, and acted as clerk, had formerly been a priest, and had distinguished himself as a casuist: he now opened his mouth for the first time, and said, with a solemn tone, 'By *reformation* she meant *destruction*.'

'Ay, she certainly meant destruction,' rejoined the first commissioner.

'And if the prayer should ever be granted,' resumed the clerk, 'it is more likely to be according to the *meaning* than the expression of the petition.'

'Most assuredly,' said the chief commissioner.

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'It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence, that the princess Elizabeth's prayers were anti-revolutionary,' confirmed the casuist, 'and might have been the cause

<sup>25</sup> Mary Charlton, *The Parisian; or Genuine Anecdotes of Distinguished and Noble Characters* [London, 1794], II, 140-43. It was not always the assault of queens, princesses and dutchesses which comprised the recurrent images of the anti-Jacobin novels' reproduction of Burke's Marie-Antoinette trope. In Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne*, for instance, we find ordinary communities of peasants, and a convent of nuns, allotted the same fate and the same piteous recourse to flight: 'Butchered under their own roofs in the unresisting and unconscious moment of midnight oblivion! - one half-naked fugitive alone escaped to tell the tale of blood! - Such are the effects of internal conflicts, religious infidelity, and the exterminating councils [*sic*] of the sanguinary Marat!' (I, 102).

of oversetting the revolution: and to overset the revolution by dint of prayers is just as treasonable as by any other means: for, when the revolution is overset, where is the difference?'

'None! none!' exclaimed the commissioner.

'That being the case,' said the clerk, 'it is clear that the princess Elizabeth was a bloody-minded tyrant, and merited death.'

'Ah! the monster,' said my mother.... bursting into tears as she uttered it.<sup>26</sup>

If this seems a trifle sardonic, there are several more ardent, if still risible, treatments of similar scenes elsewhere. In Smith's *Banished Man* the revolutionary judges of D'Alonville, in what must be admitted to be a very skilfully handled twist in the plot, turn out to be the two most contemptible characters we have so far encountered, the hero's apostate brother and the Abbé Heurthofen, whom we know to be despicable villains from their earlier appearances, and whose Jacobinism is evidently merely a costume worn to facilitate their general malevolence, especially their hatred of D'Alonville. He is locked away in the deepest dungeon, and then made to witness mass executions, every minute expecting to take a more active part in them.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, in Mary Robinson's *Natural Daughter* (1799), we trace the progress of our heroine, Martha Morley, who, with her husband, is arrested in Paris, thrown into the *Abbaye* gaol ('where every horror and every insult convinced them, that their peril was no less imminent than certain'), and taken, with all due suspense, to hear her destiny:

With a palpitating bosom she reached the hotel, guarded by two soldiers. It was spacious and splendid. She ascended the stairs to the first suite of apartments; she entered a salon magnificently furnished; and she beheld a barbarous, an unrelenting judge, the abandoned Julia. Mrs Morley shrieked and fainted.<sup>28</sup>

Since Julia is Martha's sister, the current mistress of Robespierre, and the lover of Mr. Morley, whom she promises to free if he will only return her passion, we see just how successfully Robinson, like Smith, had been able to integrate the process of Revolutionary justice into the plot and character definition of her novel. Just as our already subsisting contempt for the Revolution fuels our contempt for Julia, or the Abbé Heurthofen, so what we already know of them deepens our response to the Revolution, each response feeding off the other.

Above all, though, as must be evident from the passages we have been examining, it was an all-pervasive representation of the sheer abomination of the Revolution, the offences committed in its name and reaching their climax during the Terror, the period so persistently depicted, which dominated the Revolution in the novels. If a single passage had to be chosen to stand for many, it could well be from

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<sup>26</sup> Burke had inveighed against dancing-masters in particular as the sort of person most likely to benefit from the French levelling system and to implant themselves into, and thus destroy, the old, hallowed family networks upon which society was based. *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791), pp.294-335 in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, ed. L. G. Mitchell [Oxford, 1989], p.317. Moore, *Mordaunt*, II, 59-62, and see Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne*, III, chs. 14-15, for a plan to spring Elizabeth from prison.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, *Banished Man*, III, ch.8. See Maria Edgeworth's 'Madame de Fleury', pp.177-328 in *Tales of Fashionable Life* [London, 1809], pp.253-63 for an almost identical incident.

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, *Natural Daughter. With Portraits of the Leadenhead Family. A Novel* [London, 1799], II, 265-66.

*The Natural Daughter* again, not a classic anti-Jacobin novel by any means, for Robinson criticises the tyrannical 'prejudices' still to be found in Britain and was considered by many to be a Jacobin, but possessing some flawlessly formulaic depictions of Robespierre's France. A typically second-hand description, as our heroine elicits the recollections of a friend, provides us with all the intelligence necessary to condemn the Revolution:

On our arrival in Paris, we found every thing wild and licentious. Order and subordination were trampled beneath the footsteps of anarchy: the streets were filled with terrifying *spectacles*; and the people seemed to be nearly frantic with the plenitude of dominion; while the excess of horror was strongly and strikingly contrasted by the vaunted display of boundless sensuality.<sup>29</sup>

This seems rather purple prose, quite powerful even, but the vitality of Robinson's language belies its conventionality. More or less the same evocations appear over and over again, not only within this one novel - and this same character is continually telling us that this was a 'strange country, where massacre and devastation every hour raised their hydra heads above all laws human and sacred', that she constantly 'shuddered at the horrors which usurpation diffused under the mask of freedom' - but in a dozen other fictions.<sup>30</sup> The same images continually recur, surfeiting the imagination with vast numbers of descriptions of life ebbing away in the prisons of *L'Abbaye* or *La Force*, of the guillotine cutting a swathe through the population of France, and the Revolutionary tribunals trying their hardest to keep pace with its appetite.

Read in numbers, the plain fact that so many of these depictions are so similar, that they shared such a limited representational vocabulary, nicely emphasises the increasingly emblematic rôle that these descriptions were playing. By 1807, for instance, the 'Revolutionary Tribunal' is reduced to comic cliché, though still performing a clearly didactic function, merely a place where 'members were rather in the habit of ordering prisoners to execution without the ceremony of a trial' and whose judges 'were attired in strict conformity to the etiquette of a Jacobin toilette; whereof I suppose soap was not an article, as they none of them seemed to have been ever either washed or shaved.'<sup>31</sup> And the offenses of which the Revolution is guilty are similarly distilled, quickly becoming nameless deeds, merely recounted to us as 'horrors' or 'atrocities'. We see this clearly when the innocent Swiss have to flee from the French invaders in Hugh Murray's 1804 novel *The Swiss Emigrants*. They speak only of 'those calamities which might be too certainly expected from the ravages of such an enemy as this is described to be', and one feels that Murray was either unwilling, or unable, actually to describe the specific atrocities which the French were threatening to unleash on peaceful Switzerland. When he tries, the French having arrived, he can only

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<sup>29</sup> Robinson, *Natural Daughter*, I, 205. And lest we should think this is what France has always been like anyway, she immediately adds: 'I had passed a few days in Paris, two years before, in my *route* to Italy: the change was awful and impressive. I sighed when I recollected the causes of the metamorphosis, and I shuddered while I contemplated the effects.'

<sup>30</sup> Robinson, *Natural Daughter*, I, 216 and 225.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Mangin, *George the Third* [London, 1807], II, 95-96.



come up with the disappointingly vague 'frantic scenes of riot and plunder' perpetrated by men whose 'monstrous delight was in the destruction and misery of their species'.<sup>32</sup> Although such signifiers of carnage were all that was strictly speaking required, a few gory details could still be thrown in for good measure. 'I want language to express the feelings of horror with which this observation inspired me', conceded Mangin's narrator, having witnessed a fight between two factions which has left him the only survivor in one quarter of Paris, but we should not believe him, since he could still describe himself picking his way through 'a vast area strewn with carcasses,' and could not resist throwing in aural confirmation with 'the pealing of the distant tocsin, and the frequent roar of an agitated populace.'<sup>33</sup> The language with which he could overcome his speechlessness came easily to hand, pre-packaged as clichés already taken up by other novels, his 'distant tocsin,' just to take one example - not bell, but tocsin - occurring more or less every time an intimation of Parisian massacre was needed to liven up plot or prose.

Nor can the vivid barbarity of which the anonymous *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805) speaks in its portrait of the Revolution obscure its reliance on well-rehearsed, and decidedly Burkean, images, trenchant through their symbolism not their freshness. The 'immense multitude ... bearing in front two bloody heads stuck upon pikes, with the sight of which these bloody monsters had been agonizing the feelings of the king and other royal captives' is an image that bears a remarkable, but unsurprising, resemblance to a description in Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaïde* (see above), and which no longer makes much of a pretence of veracity.<sup>34</sup> Even more revealing is the author's scene setting, citing the period at which these memoirs commence, thirteen years before the novel was published, as 'precisely that moment when France ... had undergone that terrible concussion which annihilated an ancient monarchy, and threatened ruin to every thing connected with it.' And as the novel opens, we are immediately confronted by a cut and dried assessment of the Revolution, relayed only in the series of trigger-words. Our hero's father, we are told, for example, 'did not live to witness the horrors with which his country was afflicted, nor the calamities which befell his own race', or, 'Not a week passed over in which they had not to deplore the commission of some atrocious deed, or the departure of some acquaintance who was driven into exile in order to escape a greater misfortune.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hugh Murray, *Swiss Emigrants* [London, 1804], pp.79 and 96.

<sup>33</sup> Mangin, *George the Third*, II, 120-24.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc: Containing Some Views of English and Foreign Society* [London, 1805], II, 141. The only 'factual' basis for these 'severed head' episodes I have been able to find is in the *Times* of 20 July 1789, a not entirely reliable source of course, which describes how the mob beheaded the Governor and Commandant of the Bastille, 'stuck their heads on tent poles, and carried them in triumph to the Palais Royal, and through the streets of Paris.' Probably much more important in formulating such images was a passage in Burke's *Reflections* which reconstructed the events of 6 October 1789, telling of how the King and Queen left Versailles 'swimming in blood, polluted by massacre, and strewn with scattered limbs and mutilated carasses' and were forced to watch as two gentlemen of birth and family, members of the royal body-guard, were beheaded and 'Their heads were stuck upon spears', which were carried at the front of the procession conducting the royal captives to Paris. *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 122. Doubtless the author of *De Brinboc*, and Sayer for that matter, were also basing their descriptions on a mythical image of barbarity, owing as much to the almost legendary fate of traitors in England, a few centuries previously, as to any historical incident of the Revolution.

<sup>35</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, I, 5-6 and 6-8. My emphasis.

By the time we reach the next generation of novels describing the early Revolution, Louisa Stanhope's *The Nun of Santa Maria de Tindaro* of 1818 say, the process is complete. The Revolution is only blood and death, blood and rapine, blood and savagery, something absolutely requiring execration, but never explanation. In passages which seem synopses of the events of some twenty-five years earlier inserted for the benefit of her younger readers, Stanhope gives the appearance of being the Revolution's historian, but, in fact, remains its prosecutor, citing only a series of hackneyed but potent images as her evidence:

Alas! devastation still raged in the capital: under the plea of patriotism, her citizens were butchered, and the minds of the people fomented by the most nefarious artifices; ruffian emissaries of jacobin clubs usurped the title of executive power, and every falsehood which could alarm, inflame, and agitate the populace, were circulated and believed. Nightly did the dreadful tocsin sound the signal for slaughter, and daily was the earth saturated with blood: convents, hospitals, and prisons, were alike devastated; sacrilege and profanation overthrew the altars, and Europe viewed with dismay the studies of human depravity.

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[E]ach struggle of party was marked with blood and death: bold and hardened adventurers seized the helm of power, whose only aim at competition was to outvie each other in enormity, and alternately did the Jacobins and Girondists blaze like firebrands of the earth.<sup>36</sup>

Stanhope may have retained a few historically specific details, the Jacobins and the Girondins, for example, which just about tie her portrayal to 1790s France, but in fact her scene could just as well have been taken from any revolution, or any other scene of carnage at all, revolutionary or not. The tropes in which Stanhope was dealing had become so ingrained as to supersede the events which they had originally been conjured up to represent. If this was an historical novel, then it was a novel based not on history but on novels which had represented that history.

## 2 Rationalising Revolution

The representations of revolution we have been examining aimed at exciting an emotional response which would damn the Revolution on the basis of its manifest, and increasingly assumed, horror. It was undoubtedly a powerful technique, and working in conjunction with pamphlets, graphic prints and other forms of propaganda, seems to have succeeded, convincing a nation that France, after about 1792, was indeed a land of abomination. Frances Burney, for instance, herself responsible for a novel portraying France 'during the *dire* reign of the *terrific* Robespierre', characterised herself as accepting utterly fiction's depiction, before, that is, she herself crossed the Channel, following the Peace of Amiens, in April 1802.

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<sup>36</sup> Louisa Sidney Stanhope, *Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro* [London, 1818], I, 138-39 and 203.

She was amazed to find the inhabitants of Calais civil, genteel and prosperous, noting in her journal, 'I cannot say how much this surprised me, as I had conceived an horrific idea of the populace of this Country, imagining them all transformed into bloody monsters.'<sup>37</sup> But of course, even this sort of testimony will never tell us for sure how genuinely Burney, and others like her, actually believed in the sort of picture cheerfully supplied by Smith, Craik, Robinson and the rest. Might they not simply be acquiescing in a myth which provided an easy and appealing way of coming to terms with an event so complex as the Revolution? After all, representations of its savagery, its sheer horror, provided one, and perhaps the best, nucleus around which events in France and their implications for Britain could be organised, understood, and reassuringly neutralised by that understanding. Indeed, beyond those descriptions of the Revolution which sought to excite revulsion through portrayal only, other representations of revolution had perhaps their most powerful effect in rewriting events so as to account for them, to explain exactly why they were so contemptible, and thus to rationalise a reprehension.

One such attempt to reason out a response to the Revolution is evident in the conspiracy theories, explaining the Revolution in terms of the Illuminati and the Free-masons, which found favour in Britain in the 1790s. Regardless of whether the Abbé Barruel, William Playfair or John Robison, the authors of the most notorious exposés of the supposed conspiracy, really believed that these quasi-supernatural forces had been behind the Revolution from the very beginning, it seems clear that they enjoyed such a wide currency because, as their historian has pointed out, such interpretations provided a much appreciated 'attempt to impose some order on the bewildering variety of changes which suddenly showered on Europe with the Revolution and its aftermath'.<sup>38</sup> The same quality was shared by the techniques anti-Jacobin novelists were using to rationalise the Revolution through their slowly evolving representations. The Illuminati played a dual rôle in the propaganda campaign, first organising the Revolution into something which could be nailed down to specific causes (however implausible), so that once comprehended it could be addressed, and second, denying it the status of a legitimate political movement, requiring a reasoned and serious response. The presentation of the Revolution's brutality, as we have seen it emerge in so many novels, played an analogous rôle, simultaneously giving the Revolution a unifying theme and denying it the status of a genuine expression of political opinion. But there were also more sophisticated ways in which novelists sought to comprehend the Revolution and thus to circumvent any need to engage directly with its real political meaning.

In order to discredit the Revolution, the first task was to arraign and indict its stated aims, namely its initial revolt against the French *ancien régime*, irrespective of the fact that this had long been the detestation of every true Briton. This was what Burke had attempted with his *Reflections*, and it was what

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<sup>37</sup> Burney, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* [1814, rpt. Oxford, 1991, ed. Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L. Mack and Peter Sabor], p.11, and *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay)*, ed. Joyce Hemlow *et al* [Oxford, 1975], V, 232.

<sup>38</sup> J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of Secret Societies* [London, 1972], p.15. Robert's opinion has recently come under challenge: see E. J. Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p.162.

his loyal disciple, Edward Sayer, also strived to achieve with his *Lindor and Adelaïde*. Why Sayer's response stands out amongst anti-Jacobin novels is because his vision of the *ancien régime* France that the Revolution had displaced, was, like his mentor's, an almost entirely perfect idyll, a standpoint which, however useful for an anti-Jacobin responding to events of 1789 and after, sits rather uneasily with the sort of anti-Gallicanism which was axiomatic for so many conservatives before, as well as after, the Revolution. In Sayer's fiction, the Revolution prompts a recasting of the French *ancien régime* in the British mould. It becomes the fertile, prosperous, harmonious place that we recognise from, say, de Rochefoucauld's descriptions of affluent England, or the British arcadias painted by Hannah More or Elizabeth Hamilton for their own didactic purposes, a place where, as Sayer put it, 'The peasant paid the easy and honourable tribute of respect with willingness, nay with zeal, while he received in return, the solid advantages of security and peace.' Sayer even devotes a sizable portion of his novel to having his sagacious Prieur carefully rebut each charge so often laid against the *ancien régime*, even up to and including the *lettres de cachet* so symbolic of despotism's abuses.<sup>39</sup>

This was unusual, and never an entirely convincing strategy, even in Burke's attempt, for so much of British opinion had greeted the initial Revolution with sympathy, welcoming French attempts to catch up with British liberty. More typical, and durable, was the sort of representation to be found in another novel of 1791, the anonymous *Siege of Belgrade*, which mixed reprehension of the *ancien régime* with an equal disdain of the Revolution. It is worth reproducing at length since, as well as exemplifying what we know to be the British response to the Revolution, circa 1791, and attempting to relate the Revolution to the less than perfect Bourbon regime, it appears rather prophetic. Couched as second-hand reportage as it is, and using very familiar vocabulary, it is also another early example of the sort of representation of the Revolution to which readers would become used.

At dinner the conversation turned principally upon the French revolution; and the Viscount Leinster, who had been a witness to all the sanguinary proceedings, in the beginning of that extraordinary event, related some circumstances, which had never publicly transpired. The assassination of both King and Queen, and a change of the succession, he mentioned as objects actually intended by the Duke de ---, of whom he spoke in language of great severity. But, although he censured the violence committed upon this great occasion, he very forcibly described the abstract virtue and necessity of reformation: alleging, that the spirit of the constitution, and the indispensable rights of men, had been totally absorbed in a blind and slavish obedience to despotism. The unparalleled injustice of letters de Cachet, the incredible horrors of the Bastille [*sic*], and other state prisons; the oppressions of the Ministry; the venality of judges; the wretchedness of the peasantry; the wanton cruelty and barbarism of vassalage and

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<sup>39</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, pp.4 and 145-68. '[T]here never was a period so completely free from real complaint,' Sayer insists of the *ancien régime*, defending, with a rather Machiavellian flourish, *lettres de cachet* as necessary for the maintenance of stable government in such a diffuse nation (*lettres de cachet* were the mechanism with which - at least in novels - aristocrats could imprison for eternity whomsoever they chose in the prison of their choice - a perfect counterpoint to that glory of the British constitution, *habeas corpus*). For more traditional depictions of these dreaded instruments of tyranny see, for example, Meeke's *Count St. Blancard*, I, 87, Thomas's *Adolphus de Biron*, I, 118-19, Robinson's *Hubert de Sevrac* [Dublin, 1797], II, 142, and Francis Lathom, *The Midnight Bell* [1798; rpt. London, 1989, with an introduction by Lucien Jenkins]: 'The man... replied to my question, by drawing from his pocket a paper sealed at one corner, which he held out to my view with one hand, whilst he pointed to it with the other.... guess my astonishment when I learned that the fatal paper was a *lettre de cachet* to convey me to the Bastille [*sic*] - where he would remain, without explanation, for eleven years (pp.173-74).



feudatory power; the waste of public wealth; and the abuse of prerogative; he, not only described, but illustrated in colours, strong, glowing, and natural.<sup>40</sup>

The key-stone phrase here, holding in place the whole architecture of the response to the Revolution, is Leinster's simultaneous censuring of the violence committed on this 'great occasion', whilst forcibly describing the necessity of reformation. The reconciliation of these potentially antithetical responses was an achievement that would underlie all future anti-Jacobin representations of the Revolution.

To exhibit the evils of the *ancien régime* quickly became a highly serviceable ploy for British anti-Jacobins, allowing them to compare their notion of an initial, mild and well-meaning resistance against tyranny, with the Revolution's subsequent demonstrable fall into an absolutely indefensible Terror, a fall made all the worse not by the paradise lost, but by hopes of a redemption from corruption betrayed. But this could only be the result of a complacency yielded by events of the mid-'90s, allowing British conservatives the luxury of formally recognising the corruption of the tyrannous *ancien régime*, and concomitantly admitting, in theory at least, a degree of esteem for the first, 'British-style', Revolution. Thus the novel-reader of the '90s was presented with a procession of edifying émigré aristocrats who had initially favoured the aims of the Revolution but had since learned, to their own personal cost as well as that of the nation, of the perfidy of its protagonists. Charles Lucas' 'Duke de Meritè' is typical, admitting to the world, when he finally emerges from the Welsh well in which he had taken refuge after fleeing France, that 'I conceived that I should be the grand means of making five and twenty millions of people happy, and I rashly helped to overturn the old fabric, that crushed us all in its fall.'<sup>41</sup> Smith's D'Alonville is even more explicit in formulating a paradigm in which contempt for the Revolution does not rely on praise for the *ancien régime*, but rather draws strength from the comparison:

these are the boasted blessings of that liberty for which they have for four years been contending - infatuated, misled people! The taille, the gabelle, the corvées, even the feudal services, however heavily imposed, what were they when compared with the oppressions under which you now labour! If ye had burthens under the government of an arbitrary monarch, ye danced gaily under them; but the yoke ye have put on yourselves weighs ye down to the earth - its iron points are stained with blood, and dipped in poison!<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Anon., *The Siege of Belgrade: An Historical Novel. Translated from a German Manuscript* [London, 1791], I, 47-48.

<sup>41</sup> Lucas, *Castle of St. Donats; or, the History of Jack Smith* [London, 1798], III, 120. Even having been forced to emigrate, these French aristocrats, for the most part, do not wish to see a return to the *ancien régime*, a sign of the extent to which authors had drifted away from the Burkean standpoint. H. J. Pye's Count de Tourelles, for instance, breaks off the story of his persecution by, and escape from, the Revolution to insist that 'Anxious as I am for the restoration of kindly authority, I am as far from wishing a renewal of the despotism and corruption of our old government, as in opposing that government, I was far from supposing it would be the cause of the anarchy and horror, in which France is now involved' (Pye, *The Democrat* [1795; London, 1796], I, 107-108).

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Banished Man*, III, 92. A particularly illuminating comparison, especially in regard to Smith's personal revolution, may be made with her *Desmond* of only two years earlier, in which D'Alonville's previous incarnation, the Marquis de Montfleuri, had been very much more sanguine about the Revolution precisely because it would remove these oppressions, couched in exactly the same language as D'Alonville would use: 'Enquire of them, whether they are or not better for being released from the *taille*, from the *gabelle*, from the imposts levied at the gates of every town, on every necessity of life; for the relief they have obtained from those burthens that were imposed upon them, because they were poor; while their illustrious compatriots were exempt, only because they were noble.... Enquire of the citizen, the mechanic, if he reposes not more quietly in his house from the certainty that it is not now liable to be entered by the *marechaussées*, and that it is no longer possible for him to be forcibly taken out of it by a *lettre de cachet*, in the power of a minister, or his secretary, his secretary's clerk, or his mistress ...' (I, 132-34).

As we shall see, it became a central theme of anti-Jacobin fiction to represent the Revolutionary regime as nothing more than a restatement of traditional French despotism, but at this point, the point at which novels began to integrate *ancien régime* abuses into their novels of the Revolution, another question theoretically began to arise. If the *ancien régime* was to be accepted as corrupt, and deserving of reform, could rebellion then be justified?

In fact, this was not so much a question, as a chance to demonstrate that rebellion, however justifiable the evils of the existing regime might appear to make it, could never be legitimate. Including the *ancien régime's* corruption in their fiction gave novelists the opportunity to show how even seemingly warranted insurgency would necessarily bring, as D'Alonville had been explaining, far worse evils than could have been previously dreamt of, and this, of course, was a message carefully attuned for domestic consumption, and shrewdly developed in fictional representations of revolution. In a few novels there did appear something approaching a genuine sense of debate on the long-standing problem, at the centre of the Price-Burke controversy which had opened the British debate on the Revolution, of whether tyranny justifies resistance. In Mary Robinson's *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796), for example, we see a typically benevolent Marquis, forced to flee the Revolution, frankly disputing with his daughter on the question of whether 'Anguish the most acute' - the Revolution - 'is preferable to lingering misery' - the *ancien régime*.<sup>43</sup> But such open debate remained a rarity. Indeed, *Hubert de Sevrac* was also unusual because it addressed the debate in the context of the Revolution itself, and not in the sort of crucible which a novel could so easily provide in which revolution might be presented in the abstract.

Looking back to *The Siege of Belgrade*, for instance, although the novel was set in 1789 and touched on the Revolution in France, the author chose to site his or her demonstration of the evils of insurrection, as *predicted* by Viscount Leinster in the French context, in a vague Serbian setting. The Prince Czerskaskoi is quickly established as the representative of the *ancien régime*, and the analogical representation of Revolution proceeds from there. So it is that we quickly learn that everyone agreed with Leinster's strictures on the old, corrupt order in France, save only the Prince who was 'unable to endure doctrines so adverse to his own tyrannical ideas of government'. Still more overtly our author confides, with some relish, that 'The Bastinado, the Katze, the batogen, the single and double knout, were in unremitted use through every part of his extensive government; and, such was his tyranny, that the people notwithstanding their natural insensibility, were ripe for revolt and retribution.' Yet when this inevitable rebellion arrives, and Czerskaskoi's 'prodigious gothic pile' is attacked by the oppressed peasantry, Leinster's attitude to it is unequivocal. However legitimate the grievances of the people, their insurgency simply cannot be tolerated, and the course of action incumbent upon him is plain. 'Under circumstances such as these, no time was to be lost,' we are told, and

compassion must give place to duty. The arrival of Leinster was soon known, and submission as soon demanded; but the rage was too fervent and headstrong to be

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<sup>43</sup> Robinson, *Hubert de Sevrac*, II, 6.

immediately suppressed; and the troops were, though reluctantly, commanded to fire. Many of the furious assailants were killed and wounded; some fled; and others, inflexible, resolving on resistance, stood their ground, and seemed to defy the consequences: a second unavoidable discharge of musquetry, however, shewed them the folly of opposition; and they dispersed precipitately into the country.<sup>44</sup>

This might seem somewhat ruthless - and lest, in seeing this as a repeat of the St. George's Field Massacre or as a sort of prefigurement of Peterloo, we forget that Leinster was the friend of the people, our author does remind us that under his succeeding government, the laws were respected so that 'love began to reign;... the gloomy hills of Wiatka to exult, and the vallies to smile in gladness!' - but the moral had been made crystal clear.<sup>45</sup> The Revolution is an illegitimate enterprise, the one prop that it could conceivably use to support itself - that it was an attempt to redress the abuses of the *ancien régime* - was systematically taken from it, leaving it to collapse as an enterprise which could attract any endorsement whatsoever.

And it was a point made time and again, in settings as various as the highly gothicised medieval Madrid of Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), with its famous description of the mob venting its vengeance on a community of nuns, trampling the Prioress to a pulp before bringing the walls of the convent down on their own heads,<sup>46</sup> or contemporary Jamaica, where a slave insurrection in Elizabeth Helme's *Farmer of Inglewood Forest* (1796) is reprehended by one of our narrators when his fellow slaves start to redress their grievances by 'killing their tyrants, and deluging the estates with the blood of their oppressors.'<sup>47</sup> Most often though, these fictionalisations of the illegitimacy of rebellion, and its inevitable ill-consequences, were sited in a thoroughly British context which could only have made more explicit this rationalisation of revolution as always an unjustifiable act.

The Revolution already had its analogue, of course, in that eighteenth century British institution, the mob, and numerous novelists would delight in demonstrating its inherent iniquity. One striking example is Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or Man As He Is Not* (1796), generally regarded as one of the breed of Jacobin novels, in which the hero explains to the mob in both words and blows, why even institutionalised poverty cannot justify insurrection. 'My friends,' Hermesprong tells the mob, 'we cannot all be rich; there is no possible *equality of property* which can last a day. If you were capable of desiring it, which I hope you are not, you must wade through such scenes of guilt and horror to obtain it as you would tremble to think of. You must finish the horrid conflict by destroying each other' - a point he

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<sup>44</sup> *Siege of Belgrade*, I, 48, II, 177-78 and IV, 130.

<sup>45</sup> *Siege of Belgrade*, IV, 137-38.

<sup>46</sup> M. G. Lewis, *The Monk* [1796; Oxford, 1990, ed. Howard Anderson], pp.355-58. Though our heroes have suffered greatly at the hands of the Prioress, and through the abuses sanctioned within the convent, they make a series of very strenuous, though unsuccessful, efforts to prevent the mob from prosecuting their illegal, but just, retribution.

<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Helme, *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest* [London, 1796], II, 190-91. Felix, the narrator of this inset slave narrative and himself a black slave, gives what is described as a moving oration, asking the rebels why they are venting their anger on the white plantation owners. He thereby saves the life of the young Henry (the rebels relenting and telling Henry to 'Live, white man, live to conquer black man by humanity'), becomes their overseer, and utilising mild but effective discipline, reforms the plantation so that fifty slaves do the work formerly done by a hundred (II, 193-98).

supports by knocking down a detractor, and endowing a substitute with money enough, so that by 'bribing a few of the most forward, and giving ale to others, he prevailed on them to disperse.'<sup>48</sup>

More narrowly the Church and King riots of the early '90s, especially the Birmingham riot of 1791 in which, notoriously, Joseph Priestley's laboratory was destroyed, provided a very specific trope for the representation of an uprising of the people, in a just political cause, though still utterly reprehensible. Novelists were not slow to present the picture, to reprimand the participants, nor to show how such insurrections might be quelled. When Jane West set her novel *The Loyalists* (1812) in the English Civil War and its aftermath, for instance, she gave herself ample opportunity to depict a British revolution, which she did with her usual aplomb, execrating Cromwell and his band of ruffian republicans. But she also filled her pages with the periodic irruptions of the loyalist mob, straining against the abuses perpetrated by the Parliamentary side. These she pointedly treated with an apprehension equal to her censure of the Cromwellian rabble, sending the wisest of her characters, the venerable Dr. Beaumont, to condemn 'their misconduct in taking justice into their own hands', which they had tried to do by attempting to spring the honest Jobson from gaol after he had slandered the Covenant. Beaumont is even seen to 'perform the service of a knight-errant all alone' by protecting one Lady Eleanor, though she is a republican of the deepest dye, against the honest indignation of the people.<sup>49</sup> Thomas Skinner Surr showed much the same confidence in the ability of the authorities to prevent the spontaneous rising of the people even if motivated by the most anti-Jacobin concerns. His *George Barnwell* of 1798 is surely deliberately summoning up the memory of the Priestley riot, and explaining its futility, when he has the mob surround the house of Mr. Mental, known to own a large and secret laboratory full of obscure electrical and chemical apparatus, known to be an exponent of the new philosophy, and suspected to be a member of the Illuminati. Yet when they are on the point of pulling down his house, Surr's rewriting of the riot stays their hands as he sends the local magistrate to search the house, find no incriminating evidence, and disperse the mob.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly this sort of lesson was not addressed to the mob it was describing, but if it was lacking in that kind of direct propagandism, it was still an attempt, through representations, to *explain* revolution, French and British, real and abstract, in the reassuring form of an illegitimate and doomed expression of complaint and, moreover, something which could be halted by the intervention of a respected individual representing legitimate authority. Furthermore, it was comforting to find how different a British mob was

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Bage, *Hermesprong* [1796; Oxford, 1985, ed. Peter Faulkner], pp.225-26.

<sup>49</sup> Jane West, *The Loyalists: An Historical Novel* [London, 1812], I, 138 and III, 69.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Skinner Surr, *George Barnwell. A Novel* [London, 1798], I, 144-60. See also George Walker's *The Vagabond* [London, 1799], pp.102-103, in which, after his sermon on the evils of war, a mob of soldiers just returned from America attacks Dr. Alogos's house: 'All the Doctor's cabinet of natural history was destroyed; his fine library made a bon-fire, and his elegant mansion was reduced to ashes, amidst the shouts of liberty and equality.' We might have expected this mob to shout of their loyalty to Church and King, given the echoes of the Priestley Riot and Stuepeo's ridiculous assertion that they were undoubtedly hired by the government, but perhaps Walker felt shy of accompanying the anti-Jacobinism he was preaching with any unlawful manifestation of it.



to those of France, a point made glaringly clear by a passage in *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School*, a novel of 1803. Sir Charles Sommers has been imprisoned in a private madhouse, as symbolic of the abuse of the law in Britain as *lettres de cachet* were for France, and when word of this villainy gets out, the indignant mob gathers. In their shouts we can hear just how closely they are allied to their French counterparts; in their dispersal we can see the difference:

The populace, to an incredible number, had assembled before the outer gate, threatening to demolish the Asylum. With one voice the multitude shouted out, 'Down with the bastille! [*sic*] - down with the bastille! - no bastilles for Englishmen!'

The magistrate, apprehensive of mischief, caused a chair to be brought out of the house, mounted the rostrum, and harangued the crowd. He admonished them to order, and to allow the law to revenge the cause of the injured gentleman.<sup>51</sup>

Could the Parisian revolutionaries of July 1789 have been as easily routed, we are forced to ask. No, and it is in that recognition, and the solace it brings, that lies a principal motivation for anti-Jacobinism's representation of revolution.

In the Britain of the novels, of course, there was no oppression or, if there was, it could be eradicated by legal means, but it remains clear that the main thrust of conservative fiction, perhaps all fiction, in presenting the mob, the revolutionary crowd, even the plantation slaves of Jamaica, was to show them unjustifiable in their insurgence, no matter how grievous the oppression under which they had been forced to exist. A stage further, however, was to show those grievances themselves to be a sham, to be no more than a pretext for the machinations of miscreants desirous only of pursuing their own agenda through the incitement of the crowd. If revolutionary activity was truly threatening, after all, it was because it had a genuine motivation, a real and understandable agenda demanding consideration. For George Walker, the campaign to show that the mob never had any semblance of an appreciable agenda could extend to rewriting the Gordon Riots of 1780, which (with a few contemporary modifications) featured in his *Vagabond* of 1799. While the mob is shouting 'No Popery!' and 'Lord George Gordon for ever,' its leaders are attempting to enlist Frederick, our philosophical protagonist, in their cause by revealing that their real motives have nothing whatsoever to do with their anti-Catholic bombast. 'It is our watch-word', confides the revolutionary,

The ignorant believe they are fighting for religion, but we guide them and direct where the storm shall fall. The passions of men must be raised, their rational senses must be confounded with terrific reports, before the mass can be roused; but there are always a sufficient number of profligates and vagabonds to join in with anything.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> 'A Disciple of the Old School', *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School: A Novel* [London, 1803], III, 289-90. However, our author, on another occasion, sees nothing wrong in allowing the mob to run riot uninterrupted when the object of their resentment is a homosexual libertine who had attempted the seduction of one of our protagonists. They had nearly destroyed his mansion, we are told, 'when a party of horseguards arrived. The soldiers did not feel less indignant upon this occasion than the mob; and by a generous and laudable forbearance, allowed them to finish their business before they dispersed' (I, 277). This episode is almost unique in the license it gives to the mob. The only comparable incidents, still standing out as very unusual, are to be found in Lucas's *Castle of St. Donats*, in which the young hero is allowed to prove his mettle by leading a brigade of peasants with pitchforks against a marauding press-gang, and, second, when the boy's patron, a military man, having detected the man accusing our hero of theft as the real pick-pocket, leaves him to be 'completely ducked and then horsewhipped out of the fair' (I, 59-60 and 8).

<sup>52</sup> 'I have studied the mobs of different nations,' says the conspirator, making the contemporary parallels obvious, 'and they are all alike.' Walker, *The Vagabond*, I, 134.

And we find the same exposé of the gulf between revolutionary rhetoric and the real reasons for rebellion in *The History of Sir George Warrington* (1797), the hero of which is duped into leading a crowd apparently bent on securing the higher wages which their standard of living evidently necessitates. It turns out, though, that the incendiary Davenport has shown Warrington only the hovels of those made poor by their own debauchery and immoderation. Indeed, since the mob has been unable to spread their resentment among their 'honest and laborious brethren', it soon becomes ungovernable, and, despite Warrington's protests, sets off to attack the house of the local 'squire, Mr. Annesley, with no intention other than wilful vandalism - and exactly as Davenport had planned, for the whole scheme has been designed by him only to revenge himself on Annesley. Both the mob and its pilot, Davenport, have their own motivation, neither of which has the least connection with their stated aim of relieving the poverty, which in fact does not even exist.<sup>53</sup>

Characteristically, not only was the mob in *George Warrington* led by ill-designing individuals, but, having no will of its own, it dispersed when Warrington was felled in a duel, his conqueror, a Captain Montague, apparently having only to appear for the mob to vanish. These were two parallel techniques, both of strategic significance for anti-Jacobinism's attempt to undermine the validity of revolutionary activity. If it was comforting to find that mobs could be effortlessly dispersed by individuals, generally the representatives of legitimate authority, it was equally reassuring to show the mob as merely a tool of villainous individuals, manipulating it for their own ends. By decoding the mob, in their fiction, as nothing but the mask for individual wickedness, a much more comprehensible crime, and one which had always been, and could continue to be, opposed with a solid front of reprehension, novelists were able to emasculate revolution, certainly as a coherent ideological expression of discontent. With the succession of powerful historical figures coming to dominate the Revolution in France, and at just the point when Terror chased out hope, this was a method that novelists could easily apply also to events across the Channel. Marat, and more especially Robespierre, frequently figured in fiction, the sans-culottes becoming little but an extension of their wills. John Moore even opened his *Mordaunt* with the assertion that the Revolution, like the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre before it, had not been the result of the mob as had so often been pretended, but of the malevolence of a few individuals, the Jacobin leaders and Catherine de Medici respectively, merely using the pretence of liberty, and religion - ideas designed to appeal to a mob.<sup>54</sup> Exactly who Moore thought had been pretending that the mob had been at

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<sup>53</sup> Otherwise, this episode presents a striking prefigurement of the classic nineteenth century industrial novel, Davenport resents Annesley, a man with a large manufacturing interest, because of his growing domination of county meetings, and it is a mob of industrial workers, not rural labourers, which he leads. *History of Sir George Warrington*, II, 196-III, 50.

<sup>54</sup> Moore, *Mordaunt*, I, 31. Marat and Robespierre, either separately or together, cut a dash across the action of Pye's *Democrat* (1795), Robinson's *Natural Daughter* (1799), West's *Tale of the Times* (1799), Dubois' *St. Godwin* (1800), Moore's *Mordaunt* (1800), Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800), Dallas' *Percival* (1801), Lucas' *Infernal Quixote* (1801), *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805), Mangin's *George the Third* (1807), *Memoirs of Female Philosophers* (1808), Burney's *Wanderer* (1814) and Stanhope's *Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro* (1818). In *The Natural Daughter* and *Adelaide de Narbonne* they even form, or attempt to form, libidinous relationships with principal characters, the former being remarkable for showing the mob at last wrenching itself free from Robespierre's grip. Searching for her sister, the lover of Robespierre, our heroine rushes to his hotel: 'She found the gates all open; the populace had plundered the apartments; she entered the saloon, beyond the anti-chamber; the floor was deluged in blood!

the forefront of the Revolution is difficult to imagine. Certainly it was not Burke, who gave his readers a few banditti but no organised revolutionary crowd, nor was it any of the other respected contemporary commentators on the Revolution (Moore included) since, as has been pointed out, it was only really following Carlyle's *French Revolution* (1837) that the mob became an independent entity and the chief agent of the action. If it was anyone, it was the anti-Jacobin novelists who placed the mob at the centre of the Revolution in the '90s, and yet, in almost every case, behind every mob, a depraved villain lurked.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, Charles Lucas had no doubt that all the evils of the Revolution stemmed from that one moment when 'private villains undertake to manage public good', but it is Charlotte Dacre who provides perhaps the most vivid picture of this kind of trespassing by nefarious individuals with private purposes into the public sphere of French politics, a transgression that had brought on all the horrors of the Revolution. 'You remind me', says the object of a libertine's attempt at seduction by the inculcation of new philosophy in *The Confession of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805),

of those sanguinary rebels who sought to hurl a peaceful monarch from his throne to establish a monster of their own creation, whose vices and whose indolence render them obnoxious to society, and who willingly profited by the general devastation to attain a guilty eminence on the mangled bodies of their fellow creatures; blood alone could satisfy their thirsting souls; heated by dwelling on the fancied injustice they experienced, they longed to wade through the purple current, to gorge their hearts with murder, and sink to their own gloomy level those whom they could not rise to equal.<sup>56</sup>

She can see, in other words, no distinction between private and public vice, the one inevitably leading to the other. And in the anti-Jacobin novelists' rewriting of it, the Revolution became a series of events that came about purely because Marat craved the love of Adelaide de Narbonne, or because Marat's relation by blood, 'as well as disposition', the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chevreuille, desired Eugenie de Brinboc. Revolutionary legislation, the guillotine, the Terror, were all merely means to these ends.<sup>57</sup>

Above all, the manipulation of the mob by individual villains showed that nothing had changed with the Revolution, that the same crimes were still being perpetrated by the same men, and sometimes

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murder had been permitted to blur the face of noon-day, and the abode of guilty luxury now presented the mere wrecks of desolation. Every wretch, whose heart had palpitated under the tyranny of the remorseless despot, now dealt its groans and exercised its vengeance, on even those objects, which only by being inanimate, had escaped his cruelty' (II, 268-69).

<sup>55</sup> David Lodge, 'The French Revolution and the Condition of England: Crowds and Power in the Early Victorian Novel', pp.123-40 in *The French Revolution and British Culture*, ed. Ceri Crossley and Ian Small [Oxford, 1989], pp.129-31. Lodge, though he seems unaware of the representations of mobs in anti-Jacobin fiction, is surely correct in suggesting that, in the novel, the mob would have to wait a long time before it was granted the status of an irrepressible force with its own volition - perhaps beyond Scott's *Heart of Midlothian* (1818), and not until Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and *Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

<sup>56</sup> Lucas, *The Infernal Quixote. A Tale of the Day* [London, 1801], I, 265. Charlotte Dacre ['Rosa Matilda'], *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer. A Tale* [London, 1805], I, 129-30.

<sup>57</sup> Marat, in Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne*, spends most of his time meditating on how to force Adelaide to comply with his desires, and eventually alights on the plan of passing legislation 'compelling women of rank, birth or riches, to engage in marriage with persons of the lowest origins,' - like himself - on pain of death. A note adds, 'This decree really existed' (III, 266 and 167n.). In *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, de Chevreuille's every action, ostensibly in the cause of the Revolution, is really designed to secure Eugenie. He soon persuades the Republic's executive committee to imprison her and force her to submit to him, or 'bow to the statue of liberty' - i.e. the guillotine (II, 81).

women, only the means being slightly different. In *The Parisian* (1794), for instance, we see the mob playing more or less the rôle of a *lettre de cachet*, exploited by the malevolent Compte to do away with our hero, the Marquis de St. Ouin, on whom the Compte has pinned the murder of one Lamalaige. The Compte's reasoning is sure: 'being a Noble, and the unhappy Lamalaige of the tiers etat, the populace would not have permitted him [St. Ouin] to be conducted alive to prison', but, just in case, and emphasising the Compte's complete control of the Revolution and all its processes, 'if unexpectedly they should have been inclined to spare him, the Compte's agent was directed to make a scuffle, and dispatch the young Marquis on pretence of his having attempted to escape.'<sup>58</sup> And, lest we should be tempted to think that it was unusual for a nobleman to manage the Revolution like this, Moore provides an explanation. His count, in *Mordaunt*, we first encounter as

one of the most furious against any kind of concession on the part of the government, or the least redress of any of the grievances complained of... . He declared that nothing ought to be granted to the *canaille*; and he considered nine-tenths of the nation as *canaille*.'

But once the Revolution broke, or gained an unstoppable momentum rather, he changed - and Moore is careful with his words - his language and his attire:

This alteration was more and more remarkable in the progress of the revolution, until at last the change was so complete, that those whom he had formerly stigmatized as *canaille* he now distinguished by the title of *peuple souverain*. He altered his dress as well as his language, and assumed in both the style of the *sans-culottes*...<sup>59</sup>

It hardly needs to be noted that the changes were cosmetic only, and as the story of the beautiful Marquise whom the Count has been persecuting, develops, it becomes equally obvious that what his new language and clothing signify has also remained unchanged. Not only could villainy thrive under both old and new regimes, but both regimes, as if the Revolution had never occurred, were in themselves equally corrupt, equally brutal, and equally tyrannical.

No one made this clearer than Moore, who having already shown aristocrats metamorphosing into democrats to suit their own ends, was also quick to present the process in reverse, Jacobins becoming, once in power, merely a reiteration of the tyrants they had ostensibly sought to overthrow.<sup>60</sup> In one of the periodic potted histories of events in France scattered through *Mordaunt*, Moore has his hero offer the vision of a full 360 degree revolution between *ancien régime* and Terror. 'What could be more apparent that the grievances of the ancient government of France,' Mordaunt asked, before detailing the stages of the Revolution as if it were a relay race, the baton passing from 'those who attempted to remedy them' to

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<sup>58</sup> Charlton, *The Parisian*, II, 50-51.

<sup>59</sup> Moore, *Mordaunt*, II, 34.

<sup>60</sup> This was, of course, a common motif, and one at the heart of perhaps the most sophisticated novel of the '90s, Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), in the histories of both Caleb and Falkland. Paulson has dealt, with special reference to Lewis' *Monk*, with 'the appalling ease' with which numerous protagonists took on the characteristics of those they had previously abhorred, Ambrosio, as a good example, 'assuming the vices of the tyrant he has overthrown'. *Representations of Revolution*, p.222.



the Girondins, many of whom, though inexperienced, 'meant well to their country', and eventually to 'a gang of the most horrid ruffians that ever were let loose on any nation;' so that 'France within the space of a few months, experienced greater calamities than she had suffered in the course of centuries.'<sup>61</sup> Charles Lucas took up the theme, arguing in an odd little message-in-a-bottle history of the Revolution set into his *Infernal Quixote* (1801) as a paper found by a character in the lining of a new portmanteau, that each article found wrong with the *ancien régime* had been superseded, but by a worse oppression. The 'old, rusty fetters' had gone, but were replaced by others, 'new and gilded, which rankled to the very bone'; the 'tedious formalities of the law' had been supplanted by a state in which suspicion was followed by death without a word, and in which 'slow justice' had been replaced by 'hasty murder'; and in the place of days of voluntary fasting and other 'unmeaning ceremonies' of the Church, France now has nothing but ridiculous rites and days of starvation made obligatory by want.<sup>62</sup> France's monarchy, as Smith put it in *The Banished Man*, 'was exchanged for anarchy infinitely more destructive and more tyrannical', a word echoed by so many anti-Jacobin novelists, and surely deliberately meant to jar with the stated aims of the Revolution, and a point she illustrates by having her hero discover a victim of the revolutionaries left to that most despotic of fates, a slow death in an oubliette.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps, rather oddly, it is Sayer, writing in 1791, who provides the best statement of this attempt to represent the Revolution as undeserving of our concern or sympathy, let alone support, because of its return to despotism. His paranoid prediction that when 'distinctions are abolished, degrees are levelled, and a whole body of established nobility is ... exchanged for another, whose sole pretension to preference consists in their own assertion', then 'Amurath succeeds Amurath, the tyrant is changed but the tyranny continues', perfectly sums up the attempt to rationalise the Revolution out of any possibility of being countenanced by showing it to be nothing more than a restatement of the *ancien régime*, the loathing of which had long since become habitual to the true Briton.<sup>64</sup>

The character making this observation was in fact an Englishman, a representative of Sayer and his readers, witnessing on their behalf events in France. Or rather he was not attempting an accurate account of the Revolution, nor even what Sayer thought was happening, but was articulating what Sayer thought his readers ought to be told was passing in France, and, additionally, prescribing how they ought to respond. Sayer's onlooker was not a solitary voyeur, but comprised part of what must have been a

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<sup>61</sup> Moore, *Mordaunt*, I, 275-76.

<sup>62</sup> Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, I, 265-66.

<sup>63</sup> Smith, *Banished Man*, II, 52 and III, 127. My emphasis. Jane West, similarly, speaks of the 'murderous tyranny which Robespierre created', and fills L'Abbaye, in which his victims languish before meeting the guillotine, with 'the instruments of despotism' (*A Tale of the Times* [London, 1799], III, 372-73; my emphasis). Ann Thomas, in her *Adolphus de Biron*, labels the Revolutionaries with what had become another of their standard adjectives, 'despotic', but makes them even worse than their *ancien régime* prototypes by explicitly denying them the only redeeming quality of a tyrant, for 'they were lost to every sense of Honour' (II, 37).

<sup>64</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, p.313.

sizable community of fictional Britons abroad in France, all saying much the same sort of thing, establishing what their authors must have hoped would shape the impression their fiction would make on their readers. This should remind us that the object of any anti-Jacobin novelist depicting the Revolution was, above all, to encourage their readers to deplore the example the French had set and to appreciate the contrasting state in which they were living, a sense of purpose that the peroration to *Lindor and Adelaïde* perfectly demonstrates. 'Such is the picture of universal anarchy; and such, alas! is the reality of France', says the worthy Prieur, talking of the scenes Sayer has presented to our view, although ostensibly addressing an Englishman about to return home to tell his countrymen all that he has seen. 'Bid them compare with this,' he continues, 'the blessed and peaceful state of their own county;'

their riches with our poverty, their strength with our weakness, their credit with our distrust, their security with our fear; and though last, not least, the sacred and inviolable majesty of the law, with the savage and tumultuous wilderness of licensed injustice. Let them cast their eyes over a country, whose rich and fertile prospect gratifies them with a view of unbounded prosperity; prosperity, that almost realizes the prophecies of heavenly bliss, bliss not yet to be enjoyed by man; a land flowing with milk and honey!

Let them ponder these things well in their minds, and from a sense of our misfortunes, learn to place a just value on their own happiness.<sup>65</sup>

We should remember, in other words, that representations of the French Revolution, and insurrection elsewhere, in the decade or so following its actual occurrence were essentially a screen on which could be projected domestic anxieties.

Of course, this fits in rather neatly with recent conceptions of what France meant to Britain throughout this period. Gerald Newman and Linda Colley have both suggested that notions of Frenchness helped to define British or English self-identity, Newman noting that anti-Gallican 'perceptions' around 1800 bore scant affinity to any genuine observations, but were primarily useful 'as a convenient and uniquely powerful icon in domestic political, moral and social debate,' a point marvellously borne out, as we have been seeing, by the anti-Jacobin novel.<sup>66</sup> But we have also seen that there were two distinct methods authors were using to represent revolution to a British audience, both of which were designed to encourage a vociferous anti-Jacobinism. On the one hand, it was the common attempt of many authors to diminish the threat posed to Britain by the French and their Revolution, not so much in terms of their physical threat, as either invading power or abettors of a replica revolution in Britain (as the Edict of Fraternity threatened), but as an ideological menace. Novelists attempted to deprive the Revolution of its status as a legitimate, coherent, or even revolutionary movement (save in the sense of a 360 degree rotation), and on occasion went so far as to fill their fiction with confident, not to say complacent, assertions that what they saw in France could never have happened in Britain. In as apprehensive a novel

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<sup>65</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, pp.357-58.

<sup>66</sup> Gerald Newman, 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Suggestions Toward a General Interpretation', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1975), p.386. See his *The Rise of English Nationalism. A Cultural History 1740-1830* [London, 1987] and Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* [New Haven, Conn., 1992].

as *Lindor and Adelaïde*, Sayer strove to spur British resolve by having a French émigrée record that 'the English are, and always have been affectionately attached to their Monarchs, and loyal to a degree of enthusiasm,' so that, following infractions in 1649 and 1688, this patriotic fervour 'is now revived in a manner that protects the Throne from every attack.'<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, however, there were those novelists who were anxious to display the very real danger of the Revolution, both ideological and physical, in a way designed to dispel complacency and incite a salutary anxiety. The horrors of the Revolution, which we have already seen represented so hysterically, were recruited precisely because they could serve so effectively as a grim warning to Britons. 'Let Britain shudder at the scene before her, and grasp her blessings the closer' was the message Clara Reeve was proud to be propagating through her fiction in 1793, a sentiment periodically reappearing in a preface, or the statement of a sagacious Frenchman, as in *Adolphus de Biron*:

Look, therefore, ye Sons of Britain, on the awful Scene, which France now presents to your View, with Sentiments worthy of your Character. Regard the passing Events in awful Silence, and turn our Calamities to your own Advantage, by a due Thankfulness to Providence for the Blessings you enjoy under your well-formed and excellent Constitution.<sup>68</sup>

What these blessings were, precisely, was a point open to debate, different authors suggesting different candidates to be extolled as the single thing that had done most to keep Britain revolution-free. Whilst the liberal Mary Robinson thought it was free-speech, the more puritanical George Walker thought it Britain's strict, and possibly even a little repressive, legal process, and the evangelical John Cunningham was sure it was an established religion. But the point was that these precious institutions, whatever they were; needed to be maintained, no matter what some foolish reformers (or misled reactionaries) might be saying, needed, in all probability, to be bolstered in such a time of crisis.<sup>69</sup> 'Who would repair their house in a hurricane?', Windham had asked in 1792, speaking of the possibility of political reform, but it was certainly worth battening down the hatches from the inside, which several novelists felt it their duty to advise.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, pp.63-64.

<sup>68</sup> Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, I, xx. Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, II, 90-91. Thomas addressed her moral, in fact, to an audience more extensive than merely her fellow Britons facing the Revolution: 'May all succeeding Posterity be warned!' she appealed, 'and let any human Being beware how he sows the Seeds of Sedition' (I, 222).

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, *Hubert de Sevrac*, II, 39: "'There lies the mischief!" said the Marquis to himself. "Had the tongues of my countrymen been at liberty, their swords had been unstained by blood!"' Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 264: 'I see with bitter conviction [says Frederick Fenton, the scales fallen from his eyes], that coercion and laws are necessary to restrain the arm of destruction and violence: in the imperfect nature of all terrene existences, no law can be made to deter the wicked, without being a restraint, or in some instances a grievance to some who are innocent.' John William Cunningham, *A World Without Souls* [1805?; 2nd edn., London, 1806], p.53: 'France... has proved how far liberty is preserved by the means you are recommending [i.e. disestablishment]: the people of O. [i.e. Britain] will try the same experiment upon religion. The success of France is prophetic of theirs.' In this last instance, Cunningham seems largely to have lost the urgency of the Revolution Crisis, yet his parable is interesting as an attempt to enlist a conventional use of the Revolution (by novelists and others) to justify a particular idea of what must be preserved at all costs in Britain if the nation is to survive.

<sup>70</sup> William Windham, speech of 30 April 1792, quoted in J. Steven Watson, *The Reign of George III 1760-1815* [Oxford, 1960], p.302.

The Revolution was dangerous because it was a commodity being prepared for export, even to Britain, and if this terrible trade was to be stopped, its potential consumers would need to be warned of their peril. For the purposes of their very necessary scaremongering, it was all very well depicting a Revolution in France, or in any fictionalised other-place, but would such a distanced portrayal really be sufficient to jolt Britons out of their complacency? Certainly, this appears to have been a concern of the anti-Jacobin novelists as the '90s progressed, and it was a question which appears to have received an answer in the representations of revolution that were gradually brought, by the most daring of novelists, nearer and nearer to home. This is not to say that all anti-Jacobin novelists felt no scruple about depicting revolution ravaging Britain. It was still a dangerously intoxicating theme, especially given the novel's supposed audience, and many authors determinedly confined their scenes of riot to France or some other place even further remote in either time or space. Even when novels were set in contemporary Britain, and the plot required an uprising of those who foolishly thought themselves oppressed, 'a scene of riot and confusion' might be included, but significantly remained steadfastly 'impossible to describe.' A clue to the reason for this reluctance to describe a rebellion in Britain is surely to be found in the fact that the novel in which this piece of reticence was to be found, *Leonard and Gertrude* (1800), was, as its title put it, expressly designed 'With the hope of its being useful to the Lower Orders of Society'.<sup>71</sup> Such anxieties never quite died, yet, for several of the most zealously anti-Jacobin novelists, desperate times required desperate remedies. Though the novel-reader was ultimately never actually vouchsafed a quite *contemporary*, or quite *British* revolution, several novels came close.

Naturally, the most immediate trope that presented itself, without setting revolution quite in the present, was that of the Gordon Riots of 1780, the last great explosion of anything resembling revolutionary activity in Britain. When George Walker described it, twice over in fact, once as it happened and once as Frederick, our new philosophical anti-hero, wished it would happen, it is immediately apparent that he was aiming to show his audience exactly what they, and not some fictional French aristocrat, had to fear from revolution. The scene was London, fire ravaging every part of it, 'the flames chasing the distracted people from street to street' - and we readers flee with them, taken on a grisly tour by the lurid imagination of Frederick,

to see the rage of lust despoiling those disdainful beauties, whose love heretofore was only to be won by cringing; to see trembling tyrants biting the dust, and drinking their own blood as it mingled in the kennels; to hear amidst the uproar the thunder of cannons, the whistling of bullets, the clashing of swords, the tumbling of houses, the groans of the wounded, the cries of the conquerors; and see, amidst the blazing and red-hot ruins, the sons of Freedom and Liberty waving the three-coloured banners dripping with the blood of their enemies, and hailing the everlasting Rights of Man!!!<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Anon. [J. H. Pestalozzi?], *Leonard and Gertrude. A Popular Story, Written Originally in German... and Now Attempted in English; With the hope of its being useful to the Lower Orders of Society* [Bath, 1800], p.51.

<sup>72</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 152-53.



This was powerful stuff, and meant to tell the reader that, if he loved his wife and daughter, if she cherished her husband and son, if they wished to preserve their virtue, life and property, then there could be no quarter given to even those mild new philosophers like the misguided Frederick, for they were traffickers in revolution.

Though Walker was nominally depicting the Gordon Riots, not the French Revolution, the parallel was obvious, not least because of his concentration of the one specific incident that they had in common - the storming of Newgate, or nine years later, of the Bastille. Ronald Paulson has made the point that for many in Britain, the fall of the Bastille *was* the French Revolution, but this was not the only reason for its being taken up as the perfect synecdoche of revolution by a number of novelists, for it was an incident, which perhaps more than any other in the course of the Revolution, brought home the real menace of insurrection to the average British novel-reader.<sup>73</sup> The image of the state's chief prison being attacked by the mob, its prisoners, a nation's most depraved criminals, being let loose into the night, was exceedingly potent (whether, in either case, it had actually happened or not). Partly, this was because it had taken place in Britain as recently as 1780, and so if any kind of revolutionary activity was conceivable, then this was it, but also, its propagandising potential lay in the fact that convicts freed from prison could be in no way considered philosophical or political, but were just ordinary lawbreakers, common criminals, whom anyone and everyone might denounce without compunction.

Walker chose to bring home the realities of revolution to his readers by demonstrating how much they had to lose in terms of property, for the dregs of society released from Newgate in *The Vagabond* set off to burgle London on a massive scale.<sup>74</sup> The anonymous author of *Dorothea; or, A Ray of the New Light* (1801), however, determined that even this threat was not sufficiently alarming to startle her readers out of their complacency. First, she brought the revolutionary scene even more up to date, her reiteration of the Bastille's fall set in a vague mid-'90s Ireland, although of course bearing unmistakable echoes of the Irish Rebellion of 1798. Then she showed her readers the miniature revolution in all its gory detail, starting with the crowd preventing justice from being carried out by seizing from the scaffold several rebels sentenced for their insurgent activities, and from there, proceeding to yet worse outrages:

The populace exulting in their conquest, no longer knew any bounds to their fury; charmed with this first effort they resolved to proceed in the great work of emancipation; and for this purpose, turning their whole strength against the doors of the prison, the barriers gave way, and the inhabitants whom prudence, policy, or justice had secluded within its walls, being freed from their thralldom, so many more citizens were added to the population of Kilkenny.

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<sup>73</sup> Paulson, *Representation of Revolution*, p.41.

<sup>74</sup> And compare Charlotte Smith's 1794 depiction of Revolutionary Paris, less *horrific* than usual, in the sense that there was less blood swilling around the gutters, but perhaps more *frightening* in its canvassing of what the middling Briton might expect from the Revolution - economic stagnation: D'Alonville 'saw the once-flourishing tradesmen of Paris sitting in his almost deserted shop, looking pensively on bales of goods which had lain unfolded, and unasked for, for more than two years: he saw the class of manufacturers without employment; and, while they joined the hired multitude, execrating the cause that their necessities had compelled them to engage in.' *Banished Man*, IV, 7-8.

As if this was not unsettling enough, these ruffians, like the common criminals they were, a point explicitly emphasised, escaped into the country, and feeling their hunger, determined to pillage the first house they came to. It is a pretty cottage, the very seat of domestic felicity and bucolic contentment. Having picked up a smattering of new philosophy, their leader encourages their plan - 'the good things of the world are common stock, upon which one man has as valid a title as another, to draw what he wants' - and they quickly resolve to 'exemplify their doctrine on the poor farmer', killing the only man amongst them who objects. But not content with satisfying their appetites, having stormed the house and stolen its contents, in a genuinely shocking scene, they murder the farmer, his wife and their three children, a crime given no Jacobinical justification whatsoever, emphasising the evil, rather than the folly, of anyone abetting revolution.<sup>75</sup>

The Irish Rebellion was the starkest portent a novelist could brandish in front of their too nonchalant readers. Both the author of *Dorothea*, and of *The Infernal Quixote*, sent their villainous new philosophers from mainland Britain, the real sphere of their plots against government and heroines alike, to Ireland to ferment revolution, as if to demonstrate, at just one remove, the inevitable results of their schemes should they remain unchecked. As we have just seen, Thomas Williams, the villain of *Dorothea*, was able to incite rebellion in Kilkenny, and proceeding to the ruination of a young woman in Dublin, succeeded in the dual objectives which, ultimately, he would not quite be able to achieve in England. Lord James Marauder, the Infernal Quixote, adopting the pseudonym Patrick McGinnis, even more overtly involved himself in the Irish Rebellion, and Lucas uses his character to investigate, and expose, just how close to revolution Ireland, and by implication Britain, came in 1798. Lucas uses McGinnis' involvement with the United Irishmen to reveal everything about them, all frighteningly efficient, from their organisation - half a dozen pages explaining the structure of their executive and its sub-committees - to their propaganda, which thankfully, Lucas says, helped to betray their plans to the ministry. Through McGinnis we discover their 'real intentions', hidden from their followers and known only to the leaders, which of course transpire to be only 'the introduction of that no-principle of the French'.<sup>76</sup> And through all this, Lucas seems to have just two objectives - to display what ordinary people had to fear from rebellion, and just exactly how close Ireland had come to full-scale revolution. Thus we learn of how, under McGinnis' leadership, 'large parties of the natives sally forth at night, and plunder their helpless neighbours;' of the thousand well-disciplined men, with McGinnis at their head, seated on as fine a horse as any in the King's service, who can sack any town they choose in their search of arms and ammunition; and thus we find that it was only the pusillanimity of their high command that prevented the rising

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<sup>75</sup> Anon., *Dorothea*, II, 40-55.

<sup>76</sup> Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, III, 177-82, 168-69 and 182.

becoming general. As Lucas pointedly puts it, 'the ambitious prospects of the hero seemed to meet with no check but the timidity of his own party', a rebuke to Government and the British people alike.<sup>77</sup>

### 3 Appropriating Revolution

*Dorothea* and *The Infernal Quixote* drafted in the Irish Rebellion in 1801, enlisting it in their campaign to preserve Britain from the threat of Revolution. Over a decade later, the Rebellion of 1798 was still providing an exhilarating backdrop for fiction, but manifestly without the same degree of didactic intent. Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* of 1816, for instance, was set in Ireland in the late '90s and featured a rather ill-defined mob of United Irishmen, apparently bent on revolution, fading in and out of the action according to the exploits of the protagonists of the novel, the leaders and adversaries of the mob (as and when, that is, they could take time off from their more pressing domestic tribulations).<sup>78</sup> And if in Lamb's novel the Rebellion was little more than an historical landscape around which the heroes and heroines could wend their way, in Eaton Stannard Barrett's *Heroine* of 1813 the rebels made their incursion into the fiction for predominantly comic effect, appearing as a huddle of 'gentlemen with rusty superfine on their backs, and with the longest words in the world', which they used to inveigle the honest Jerry Sullivan into their plots, as he later recounted, persuading him 'that old Ireland was going to ruin; I forget how now, but I know I had the whole story pat at that time; and the end of it was, that I became a United Irishman.'<sup>79</sup>

Since it seems so unlikely that either Lamb or Barrett was representing revolution for any overtly ideological purpose, especially when we contrast their fiction with that of Lucas or the other ardent anti-Jacobins of the two or three years on either side of 1800, certain questions naturally arise. Given that revolution or rebellion could seemingly be presented in the 1810s without any overt didacticism, should any representation of revolution a decade or so earlier be regarded as a necessarily ideological or didactic statement? Is it, in other words, over-interpreting these texts to insist that any representation of the horrors

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<sup>77</sup> Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, III, 263, 265-66 and 267. The complacency of the ministry is Lucas' chief target: 'The murder and robbery of individuals had become so frequent, that it ceased to be a matter of surprise; and the uncivilized state, and natural wildness of that neighbourhood, made the depredations of McGinnis and his gang less an object of notice to the Government' (III, 268). In fact, this lack of boldness on the part of the United Irishmen was the second time that McGinnis' hopes had been frustrated, the first affording some credit to Government, the fleet having appeared so promptly at Bantry Bay to chase away the French landing party (III, 152-54).

<sup>78</sup> Take, for instance, the introduction of the Rebellion into the fiction (not occurring until chapter eighteen): 'The threatening storm of rebellion now darkened around. - Acts of daily rapine and outrage alarmed the inhabitants of Ireland, both in the capital and in the country: all the military forces were increased;' - which serves as the means by which Lord Avondale, commander of those troops detailed to quell the rising, is removed from his home leaving time to hang heavy on his wife, Calantha, and to provide the first intimation that their marriage will not be a happy one. Lamb, *Glenarvon* [1816; London, 1995, ed. Frances Wilson], p.60.

<sup>79</sup> Barrett, *The Heroine, or Adventures of a Fair Romance Reader* [1813; London, 1909, with an Introduction by Walter Raleigh], p.217.

of Revolution in France, or elsewhere for that matter, whether in 1801 or a dozen years later, must, or even can, be assessed as a deliberate expression of anti-Jacobinism? Ultimately, of course, short of finding the explicit testimony of the authors, we will never be able to discover which novels were overtly and primarily anti-Jacobin and which employed representations of revolution for other, perhaps more purely *literary*, purposes (and even such testimony would not guarantee that readers complied with these authorial intentions). To search for an answer remains a valid undertaking, however, and an illuminating one, for though it must fail to reveal a clear dividing line between deliberately didactic, and what we might call 'scenic,' anti-Jacobin depictions of revolution, a certain symbiosis quickly becomes apparent, which once identified, appears to be a characteristic of all, even the most propagandistic, conservative fiction of the 1790s and 1800s. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, it also becomes perceptible that once representations of revolution had come to be drafted into an anti-Jacobin campaign, they stayed enlisted, even in that fiction which lacked the conspicuous and wilful didacticism which had originally inspired their appearance.

Firstly, though, it might be helpful to consider when, if indeed it did occur, the overtly anti-Jacobin import of these fictional representations of revolution could be deemed actually to have drained away. It is interesting to find that as early as 1804, and from as committed an anti-Jacobin as Robert Bisset, there is an example of the Irish Rebellion being used in a combination of the purely plot-assisting manner of *Glenarvon* and the comic vein of *The Heroine*, both of which uses are conspicuous in the adventures of Roger O'Rourke, the rather picaresque villain of his *Modern Literature*. Fleeing from the law, Roger, the sometime new philosopher and Methodist, winds up in Ireland in the early '90s, where he declares himself a Catholic, and 'ready and willing to become an united Irishman.' He pursues his career of infamy, pretending to be a Catholic priest, but reverting to Methodist minister when it suits him, traversing the country 'confessing the women; and exhorting the men to what he called the emancipation of Ireland', but just as often defrauding widows of their last pennies or perpetrating highway robberies, for which offence he was at last apprehended, tried and hanged.<sup>80</sup> Roger's stint in Ireland has been both diverting and has allowed Bisset to dispose of his villain, as the plot demanded, quickly, easily and even with an edifying moral. It has also been broadly didactic in the context of the Revolution crisis, linking the rebels, targets of many aspersions, with a rogue in the traditional mould. It is, in other words, a half-way house between the propaganda of Lucas, say, and the ambivalence of Lamb.

So too was Frances Burney's *Wanderer* of 1814, as the work of Margaret Doody has intimated. She calls it 'in a sense a novel of the '90s', an ideological novel, but also likens it to the 'modern historical novel' of Scott and later authors.<sup>81</sup> Burney evidently fills her novel with a distinctive kind of anti-Jacobin didacticism, but as Doody's analysis reveals, also saw the Revolution as providing the novelist with an invaluable source of incidents, opinions and indicators, which could be no end of use to their plots,

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<sup>80</sup> Bisset, *Modern Literature*, III, 229, 231-34.

<sup>81</sup> Doody, *Frances Burney*, p.318.



characterisations and moral purpose.<sup>82</sup> It goes almost without saying that the Revolution could, as was the case with *The Wanderer*, provide a wonderful basis for a novel, propelling a forlorn, friendless and fascinating heroine into the wilderness of mixed dangers and delights which constituted the natural province of the novel. But it also provided authors with a marvellous opportunity to test the mettle of their protagonists, to delineate their moral worthiness as it intermeshed with events in France, and to add colour, weightiness, a certain thrillingness, and a firm historical location to their fiction. Stanhope's *Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro* combines all this perfectly, the Revolution impinging on the novel only as it affects its protagonists, tearing our hero away from his beloved when he returns to France to avenge the fate of the 'hapless Louis', and marking out quickly and simply just who deserves our sympathy. The heroes we find exalted for a special type of loyal sensibility: 'Individual sufferings are nothing,' exclaims Eugenius, 'as the tears of anguish rolled down his cheeks; loyalty and patriotism ought to be the *first* feeling which warms, and the *last* feeling which expires in the heart of man.'<sup>83</sup> The vestiges of anti-Jacobinism very clearly remain, but subservient to the literary advantages which could accrue to novelists through their recruitment of the Revolution. It was no coincidence that the horrors of the Revolution became a frequent subject of fiction in an age renowned for its fascination with the 'horrid novel,' a point borne out by Catherine Morland's famous conflation of the two in *Northanger Abbey* (1818).<sup>84</sup>

It was, however, in this very space between propaganda and the nonpartisan novel (however abstract a concept that may be) that, to varying degrees, all the fiction we have been considering has been positioned. Just as even the most apparently disinterested novelist to include revolution in his or her fiction could not do so without making some kind of ideological commitment inherent in its production, let alone its reception, so not even the most vehement, or blatant, of anti-Jacobin novelists could include anti-Jacobin propaganda without it being in some way enmeshed in the fiction. The balance between an apparently calculated and an apparently inadvertent anti-Jacobinism did tilt over the decade or so after 1800, but even the most determinedly anti-Jacobin novelists had been content to include representations of revolution for the 'literary,' rather than ideological, benefits that could accrue. For instance, if in *The Wanderer* and *The Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro* we saw the French intruding into the fiction only to

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<sup>82</sup> For Burney's anti-Jacobin portrayal of the Revolution, see Doody's 'Appendix I' to *The Wanderer*, pp.875-84. In her critical biography, Doody notes how Burney has used the Revolution to exalt the character of her heroine. 'Self-exertion can alone mark nobility of soul and self-dependence only can sustain honour in adversity', we are assured, and it is the Revolution that has, as various characters confirm, 'animated the exercise of reason, the exertion of the faculties, activity in labour... and cheerfulness under every privation', or 'has formed... in the trials, perils and hardships of a struggling existence, your courageous, though so gentle niece!' (*Frances Burney*, pp.323 and 331).

<sup>83</sup> Stanhope, *Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro*, I, 119. The eponymous narrator introduces the Revolution thus: 'And now approaches that period of my life, when the fury of an insatiate mob disgraced the name of civilization - when rebellion, borrowing the garb of patriotism, blotted the fair fame of France, and steeped her lilies, and her glories, in the life's blood of her sons.' But this is the backdrop to the real relevance of the Revolution: 'Consternation and dismay spoke in the features of my lover: his family were involved; his fame, his property were alike at stake ...' (I, 117).

<sup>84</sup> 'I have heard that something very shocking indeed will soon come out of London.... It is to be uncommonly dreadful. I shall expect murder and everything of the kind' - meaning a new gothic novel, but interpreted by Eleanor Tilney as civil unrest. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* [1818; Harmondsworth, 1985. ed. Anne Ehrenpreis], p.126.

designate the virtues of the protagonists, there could be no more flagrant example of this same literary exploitation of the political climate than in Pye's classically anti-Jacobin *Aristocrat* of 1799. As a consequence of his Frenchified education, Sir Edward Eaglefield has on a number of occasions been embarrassed by his inability to perform the offices expected of an Englishman (which consist of fixing saddles and rescuing damsels), but he is determined to learn these necessary skills, becoming particularly fired at the idea of soldiery. His chance to prove himself reformed comes not, as before, when a saddle slips or a companion falls down a cliff, but when a party of French 'corsairs' (this is c.1792) lands a mile or two from his residence in Scotland, loots the house, and takes the whole party staying there hostage aboard their ship - save for Sir Edward, who fled on their approach. Or so, to our heroine's chagrin, it had appeared, for, in fact, he had run off to summon a local detachment of the British navy, who, together with Sir Edward, capture the ship, and save his friends and their possessions. His reformation is complete.<sup>85</sup>

No more contrived episode could be conceived, yet this should not surprise us for the Revolution as plot device was a constant component of the most committed anti-Jacobin fiction, bearing a didactic burden, but often very evidently primarily designed with the intention of shaping the storyline rather than the readers' political convictions. Occasionally it shows-through with astonishing blatancy. 'By this time the troubles in France had gained such a crisis,' writes Sarah Wood, when it was time to pitch her protagonists off to Britain, 'that it was necessary for every friend to order, for every lover of peace and religion, to leave that ill-fated nation', and it is only as if as an afterthought that she adds a few explanatory details: 'The principles of the Illuminata [*sic*] triumphed; anarchy, confusion and bloodshed succeeded'.<sup>86</sup> And in *The History of Sir George Warrington* the lovely heroine is steered into the hero's path by the French having heartlessly abolished their convents.<sup>87</sup>

Even specific events could be used to hurry along the storyline. The fall of Robespierre, for instance, was a recurrent plot device, used, as we have seen, in Robinson's *Natural Daughter* to secure our heroine's release from a Parisian prison and to punish her sister, the last of Robespierre's mistresses. In a novel of almost ten years later, the anonymous *Memoirs of Female Philosophers* (1808), the fall of Robespierre is again appropriated to release one of its allegorical heroines, Allegrina, from the *Abbaye* prison, although bizarrely she and her fellow inmates had enjoyed their time behind bars, Allegrina having taught them to dance and draw, and forbidden them to mention the guillotine.<sup>88</sup> And in Mangin's *George the Third* (1807), the same frivolous note also sounds. Its hero, George Ardent, gets himself imprisoned

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<sup>85</sup> Pye, *Aristocrat*, I, 192-203.

<sup>86</sup> Sarah Sayward Barrell Keating Wood, *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron. A Novel: Founded on Recent Facts, which have transpired in the course of the late Revolution of Moral Principles in France* [Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1800], p.284.

<sup>87</sup> 'An order for the destruction of the convent came down from Paris. Let me not dwell on that day: its horrors were too much for memory: the old, the sickly, the infirm, wandering for support they could not obtain; the young subjected to every insult the brutality of the multitude chose to inflict.' Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington*, I, 153.

<sup>88</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of Female Philosophers... By a Modern Philosopher of the Other Sex* [London, 1808], I, 118-20.

in Revolutionary France (there are so many prisoners that his gaol is an ex-cathedral), finds himself selected, seemingly at random, for the guillotine, is stripped and bound, taken to the *Place de la Révolution*, even to the foot of the scaffold - but all the time seems more bemused than frightened or horrified - and then reveals:

This was, in short, a day never to be forgotten in the annals of Paris, or in mine; - the memorable one which produced the downfall of Robespierre, gave security to the National Convention, and life to the son of the rector of Oakley [i.e. Ardent]. Somebody else, however, must write the history of the French people, whilst I proceed on my own.<sup>89</sup>

Despite its light-heartedness, this was still the Revolution in all its horror, lacking in explicit didacticism perhaps, but still definitely anti-Jacobin. And this was true of more or less all novels representing the Revolution ten or so years after it happened. They might have been historical novels, because they were depicting events of several years previously and because they had left behind the crisis which had originally put the Revolution into fiction, but they were still, implicitly in their depictions, ideological novels, anti-Jacobin novels, having absorbed unchallenged the anti-Jacobinism of previous representations. We see it in *The Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* as well, in another somewhat facetious description of the Revolution, which relies on a view of the Revolution as a horrific and barbarous series of events, not for any didactic reason, but for its literary effect. The description of the Revolution given by a minor character, Halfaz, is a burlesque of which he is unconscious, and which we can only appreciate knowing what we know, or rather what we have been told, of France in 1793:

The consequences of this stupendous event [the regicide], were such as might naturally be expected, a general reformation of manners; the temple of superstition shut up; the barriers of usurpation and odorous distinctions between man and man annihilated; the worship of reason restored; republican virtues enshrined; the right of insurrection legally acknowledged; that ridiculous foppery called politeness, the spawn of courts and corruption, thoroughly exploded; and the most frivolous nation in Europe changed in an instant, as it were by magic, into a new race of Spartan heroes.<sup>90</sup>

The abomination of the Revolution is the critical *donnée*, without which we cannot understand the irony. So, although this is light-hearted, although it is not actively proselytising, this is a passage in a novel that retains its anti-Jacobinism, albeit without retaining the sense of crisis that originally put it in fiction.

In fact, the balance between ideological representation of revolution and merely 'scenic' depictions constitutes a sort of dynamic equilibrium, constantly shifting within novels, and from one novel to another, as well as over time. At one end of the scale is *Lindor and Adelaïde* or *Adelaide de Narbonne*, perhaps, and at the other, *Glenarvon* or *The Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro*, with *George the Third* and *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, and indeed all the other novels, somewhere in between. Never did anti-Jacobin didacticism come completely to dominate a novel to the exclusion of plot, character or the

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<sup>89</sup> Mangin, *George the Third*, II, 116-17.

<sup>90</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, I, 167.

conventions of fiction, but nor, for a generation, could that anti-Jacobinism entirely fade away. A knowledge of the horror of revolution could be presupposed not only because the Revolution in France circa 1792-94, historically speaking, had self-evidently proved itself an abomination, but because this interpretation had become enshrined in fictionalised representations of it, had become the Revolution, to all intents and purposes, for authors and audience writing and reading in the twenty years after the Terror had subsided. This was the success of the genre of anti-Jacobin novels. Representation of revolution remained imbued with conservatism long after those authors including it in their novels had forgotten why it had originally been put there. By Waterloo, if anti-Jacobin representations of revolution were theoretically obsolete, they were certainly not so in practice.



## 4: The New Philosophy

This volume to the reader's eye displays  
The infernal conduct of abandoned man;  
When French Philosophy infects his ways,  
And pours contempt on Heav'n's eternal plan;  
Reversing order, truth, and ev'ry good,  
And whelming worlds, with ruin's awful flood.

- Epigraph to Sarah Wood's *Julia, and  
the Illuminated Baron. A Novel* (1800)

Anti-Jacobinism, insofar as it can be ascribed a coherent identity at all, was more propaganda than ideology. This, indeed, was its great tactical strength, for in defining itself purely in terms of what it was not, in terms of what it was opposed to, its protagonists evaded the necessity of having to formulate any doctrine of their own, a doctrine from which independently minded members of its potentially vast constituency might demur. Any attempt to assess anti-Jacobinism, then, immediately finds itself trying to define what that Jacobinism was that provoked anti-Jacobinism into being, or rather what conservatives thought it was, and it is at this point that the seeming simplicity of the apparently polarised debate on the Revolution in France begins to dissolve.

Much has been written about radicalism in Britain in the 1790s, but this is not to say that a congruous ideology of radicalism has ever been discerned.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, no single conception of Jacobinism has been found that might have been cheerfully subscribed to by both radicals and conservatives. Indeed, Gary Kelly's suggestion that British Jacobinism was, like anti-Jacobinism, defined by its opponents, though observably true, only complicates the issue still further, formulating an equation which runs neither way, a notional anti-Jacobinism defining Jacobinism and a notional Jacobinism defining anti-Jacobinism.<sup>2</sup> The result was a sort of war of shadows, the anti-Jacobins in particular starting at a spectre of their own imagining, and one which portended a significantly more revolutionary destiny than almost any corporeal radical would actually have sought.

Jacobinism, from anyone's point of view, was more insult than ideology, if not entirely meaningless, then so broad a term that it could encompass any transgression against the institutions or

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobinism's heterogeneity is the most recurrent theme of those surveys which have been undertaken. See, for instance, Robert Birley, *The English Jacobins from 1789-1802* [Oxford, 1924], Philip Anthony Brown, *The French Revolution in English History* [1918, rpt. London, 1965], Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* [Cambridge, 1984], Carl B. Cone, *The English Jacobins* [New York, 1968], H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property. Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* [London, 1977] and *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* [Oxford, 1985], Michael Freeman, *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism* [Oxford, 1980], Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the age of the French Revolution* [London, 1979], Edward Royle and James Walvin, *English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848* [Brighton, 1982], E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* [1963, rpt. Harmondsworth, 1982], and Gwyn A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes: Popular Movements in France and Britain during the French Revolution* [London, 1968].

<sup>2</sup> Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel. 1780-1805* [Oxford, 1976], pp.1-2.

manners of the *status quo*. In religious terms only, for instance, denominations right across the spiritual spectrum could be reviled with the label. Thus, whilst Robert Bisset in 1800 claimed that Jacobinism and the strict *Calvinism* of the Scottish 'seceders' were united, Samuel Horsley could insist in the same year that 'The Jacobins of this country, I very much fear, are at this moment making a tool of *Methodism*,' and George III dismisses the idea of *Catholic* Emancipation a year later as 'the most Jacobinical thing I ever heard of!'<sup>3</sup> Even in the reign of the next monarch but one, the original Jacobins by then an extinct species and 'revolutionary' political reform actually about to materialise, the word was still in use, not merely as a meaningless insult, but as a sin grave enough to be transmitted through three generations to deny Ben Brierley a dish of beef stew at the charity feast laid on to celebrate William IV's coronation, simply because 'thy gronfeyther's a Jacobin.'<sup>4</sup>

Back in 1799, when Francis Wollaston had seen fit actually to attempt a definition of Jacobinism, he came up with a matrix of all that was nefarious. The evolutionary process he charts, evidently much influenced by the conspiracy theories of Baruel, Robison and Playfair, reads like a travesty of a thoroughbred's pedigree, or some infernal formula for conjuring a demon:

To the liberty and equality of original free-masonry; to the fierce rancour of Voltaire and his self-called philosophers against Jesus Christ and his religion; to the democratic principles of Rousseau, and his visionary schemes about the origin of all government; these delegates [he is talking of the Illuminati] added, the rage of Weishaupt and his pretended more enlightened followers, against all kings, or rather against all who under any title bear any rule among men. The fiery spirit of the French, kindled at once into a Flame. The names of free-mason, of philosophers, of friends to a social compact, of illuminé or enlightened, were from that instant all absorbed in the one name of Jacobin.<sup>5</sup>

Two things are apparent here that are fundamental to any understanding of the Jacobin threat. Wollaston's identification of many different but interconnecting strands of Jacobinism is one, and had its expression most commonly in the envisaging of Jacobinism as Hydra-headed, both in the sense that the menace emanated from so many directions, and that the monster seemed to grow more fearsome the more it was fought. A second point to note is that Wollaston was ostensibly, although rather vaguely, talking of the authentic Jacobins, the militant Revolutionaries who had originally met in the Dominican Monastery of St. Roch, and thus was doing his best to provide a text-book anti-Jacobin answer to the question of what caused the Revolution in France. Revolution, in other words, was caused by Jacobinism. Revolution was not an evil to be combatted in itself so much as an effect to be prevented by striking at the cause - Jacobinism.

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added. Robert Bisset, *Douglas; or, the Highlander* [London, 1800], I, 72-73; Samuel Horsley, 'The Charge of Samuel, Lord Bishop of Rochester, to the Clergy of his Diocese: Delivered at his second general Visitation, in the year 1800', *The Charges of Samuel Horsley* [Dundee, 1813], pp.147-48; George III quoted in Gerald Newman, 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Suggestions Toward a General Interpretation', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (June 1975), 391.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Brierley, *Home Memories and Recollections of Life* [London, 1886], p.6.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Wollaston, *A Country Parson's Address to his Flock, to Caution them against being misled by the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing, or receiving Jacobin Teachers of Sedition...* [London, 1799], pp.16-17.

Nowhere do we see both these convictions more fully than in Mary Anne Burges' highly schematised novel, *The Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent, in Jacobinical Times* (1800). In her Bunyan-inspired topographical representation of the ideological stresses of the times, revolution is a mountain, dangerous and forbidding indeed, but neutral in itself and always having existed, and it is only when the forces of Jacobinism scale the mountain that its horrors become apparent and palpable. Moreover, Burges' design, again like Wollaston's matrix, features Jacobinism - or rather Mr. JACOBINISM - as only one part of the project to upset all that is good, albeit its leading influence. All the forces of iniquity combine to launch their assaults, as on Mount *Sabbath*, for instance, which the pilgrim GOOD-INTENT watches with distress:

in front it was attacked by the army of BLOOD-MEN, led on by JACOBINISM, their chief captain, who brought battering-rams and scaling-ladders to take it by storm; on one side a troop of the followers of FASHION assailed it from a great distance with missile weapons; and on the other, Mr. PHILOSOPHY himself, at the head of a company of pioneers, was at work on a mine, whereby he hoped to sap the foundations, and overthrow the walls.<sup>6</sup>

Here we see three of the principal heads of the Hydra - the BLOOD-MEN, who in Burges' scheme are those villains who lead the ascent of Mount *Revolution* simply for the love of discord (the names of a few of their chiefs are RAPINE, EXTORTION, OPPRESSION, and MURDER), the devotees of FASHION (amongst whom are numbered AMUSEMENT, EXCESS, PRODIGALITY and the other inhabitants of the groves of *dissipation*), and Mr. PHILOSOPHY, patron of all the vices and keeper of the temple of *ÂTHEISM* and *ANARCHY*. Unnamed, but central to Burges' whole plan, is irreligion, which together with the other three comprises the dreadful phalanx that can and will lead on to revolution. This is so not only for Burges, but for all anti-Jacobins, although for most authors, these elements are fused, not individually identifiable as they are in her highly schematised rendering.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, this fusion of the elements of Jacobinism into one mythic, but not quite imaginary, monster is central to the anti-Jacobin campaign as it took shape in the majority of novels. They had a name for it too - new, or sometimes modern, philosophy - an umbrella term to describe, or rather comprehend without describing, Jacobinism as it appeared to them in Britain. It was a term that came to cover all the strands of the Jacobin matrix, all the varieties of poison that Wollaston had identified in France, and which were seeping into Britain. Just as Wollaston had identified Voltaire, Rousseau and Weishaupt - philosophers all - as the main springs of Jacobinism in France, so it was philosophers in Britain who were found guilty of importing the lethal French toxin, who were cast as the real indigenous exponents of Jacobinism and became, in effect, the metaphorical equivalents of Robespierre, Danton, and their associates, the original Jacobins of France. Such figures, as we saw in the last chapter with novelists' portrayals of their French counterparts, might be Jacobins either out of deluded conviction or selfish

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<sup>6</sup> Burges, *Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent, in Jacobinical Times* (London, 1800), p.181.

<sup>7</sup> Burges, *Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent*, pp.141-42, 99 and 43.

malice, but their currency, the rhetoric of their propaganda, was still philosophy. In the next chapter I shall be examining those Jacobins whom novelists depicted as having adopted new philosophy merely because it suited their transient needs and desires. Here, though, I shall be surveying what this new philosophy actually was, and indeed, this is a question which ought chiefly to concern us, for what must immediately become apparent is that no anti-Jacobin had any clearer idea of what new philosophy was than they had of what constituted a Jacobin. The relationship between the thought and writing of Rousseau and Voltaire, Price and Paine, Godwin and Wollstonecraft, and novelists' conception of new philosophy was stretched to say the least. New philosophy was the creation of anti-Jacobinism, and as such it displays, in the most cogent form we have available to us, the concerns of conservatives in the grip and aftermath of the Revolution crisis.

### *1 What was new philosophy?*

One of the factors that grants the anti-Jacobin novel the status of a significant and coherent genre, and allows the many individual texts which comprise that genre to be usefully treated in aggregate, is the extensive use of the term and concept of 'new philosophy'. Furthermore, so implicit, and therefore so vague, are the delineations of new philosophy given by individual authors that it is only by amassing their separate hints on the subject that a distinct definition begins to emerge. There undoubtedly existed a whole host of different ideas on the subject of what new philosophy was - as many as there were anti-Jacobin authors indeed - but the basic ingredients remained constant, only the specific aversions of individual authors determining exactly how it would taste.

To give a flavour of the mixture, we might start with Joseph Wildman's recipe, composed in 1799. Both the constituents of his conception of new philosophy and the concerns he expresses about their effects, are fairly typical. Only his accusation against Gibbon, as he attempts to piece together the lineage of what is a veritable international conspiracy, seems rather idiosyncratic:

Hume and Gibbon took the lead in England - Voltaire and Rousseau in France - and Goethé [*sic*] (the author of Werther) in Germany; - these pernicious scepticisms and sophisticated delusions, from their fascinating stile [*sic*], and animated diction, obtained many readers: - and those, unaccustomed to the higher pursuits of literature, in which Hume and Gibbon moved, were accessible though the medium of novels, in which were disseminated the most dangerous of principles: - principles which corrupt the heart and debase the understanding; - giving to vice the charms of virtue - to infidelity the specious colourings of superior intellectual attainment - to crimes, the shameful sophistry of irresistible necessity - and to self-destruction the delusive argument of a right in the creature to resign his existence when it ceases to afford him happiness, and the reasonableness of escaping misery.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Wildman, *The Force of Prejudice, A Moral Tale* [London, 1799], I, 66-67. The accusation against Gibbon, whom some regarded as a sceptic, is unusual, but Hume was fairly regularly the target of the anti-Jacobins, George Walker, for example, calling one of the chapters of his *Vagabond* [London, 1799] 'Mr. Hume's arguments of adultery, with practical consequences', from which a



What we can notice immediately is that Wildman does not actually name the opinions he condemns, allowing them to remain as nameless 'pernicious scepticisms and sophistical delusions'. And nowhere does he single out particular arguments to oppose, seeming rather to avoid engaging with them, mentioning 'irresistible necessity' say, which the tutored eye recognises as a reference to Godwin's political philosophy, but leaving the term to stand alone and implicate itself. Even when he makes a particular (and conventional) complaint of a specific work - that *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) encourages suicide - we should remember that Goethe's novel included no ratiocination in favour of suicide, but merely portrayed the progress towards, and commission of, the act. For Wildman, and indeed for anti-Jacobin novelists as a whole, the names or terms cited with opprobrium are cultural and ideological references, not bodies of ideas or arguments, just as the notice he takes of the supposed wave of Jacobin novels published to introduce new philosophy to the supposed 'novel-reading masses', as we have already noticed, is largely a rhetorical construction with only a hypothetical basis in reality.

Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* of 1800, though its very title claims an intimacy with the school of new philosophy, reinforces this reliance on an entirely notional 'understanding' of the ideological debate of the '90s. When we ask what the modern philosophy was to which her vain and foolish characters subscribed, no clear-cut answer presents itself. Although she cites Godwin, Rousseau, Hays and Wollstonecraft, and shows us a spouting club (a radical society, that is) and the genesis of a pantisocratic programme, *Modern Philosophers* never becomes a satire of ideas but remains a satire of individual characters who merely represent, and in very loose terms, those ideas, and then only in pastiche. What is most significant about this is that Hamilton assumes a knowledge of what modern philosophy is, assumes that the same conception of it is shared by herself and her readers. Such an approach was entirely typical, new philosophy pre-understood as necessarily wicked, a crucial donnée underlying anti-Jacobin fiction. Naturally, this was a highly effective strategy, and by obviating any need for description or analysis of philosophical or political propositions, it served both literary and ideological purposes. That the novel was not the place for philosophical disquisitions was, as we have seen, an opinion not merely artistic, but, for conservatives, an article of ideology, debate being a privilege reserved for a very few, if any, and least of all to be encouraged amongst those sections of society widely supposed to be reading novels. Moreover, for anti-Jacobins actual debate on the Revolution and its implications was an evil to be avoided wherever possible, as Mark Philp, in the context of the propaganda issued by the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property, has recently and importantly argued.<sup>9</sup> There was, in fact, an almost oppositional relationship between any hint of genuine ideological *debate* and the

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typical passage, with typically accurate references, tells of how his deluded anti-hero consulted the copy of Hume that he always carries at 'volume 2, page 409, of his *Essays*, edition 1767...' and finds 'that adultery was one of the moral virtues, and perfectly agreeable to political justice' (I, 176). But Hume had his defenders too, the anonymous author of *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School* [London, 1803] having a protagonist meet Hume and highly commend him, setting him apart from 'the sowers of sedition and disturbers of the world's quiet' (I, 159).

<sup>9</sup> Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), 42-69.

intentions, if not always the practice, of the anti-Jacobin campaign as a whole. However tempting it may be to think of the years following the French Revolution as a time when a 'war of ideas' was playing itself out, this must be something of a misnomer, at least at the level of fiction. After all, one side in this war, and by far the stronger, as well as ultimately victorious side, was determined to avoid any encounter with the enemy if it was to be fought on their terms, in the field of ideas.

Second, denying new philosophy any serious treatment in fiction, as Hamilton and the anti-Jacobin novelists were doing, was a powerful comment in itself. Crucially, of course, new philosophy was an ironic designation. Philosophy was a good, *new* philosophy should be better, but, in fact, was a perversion. The irony could only be understood by those who already knew that 'new philosophy' was a cipher for Jacobinism, and that Hamilton could confidently trust that the irony of her title, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, would be comprehensible to anyone seeing it on the shelf of a bookseller or circulating library is indicative of the accuracy of this assumption by the turn of the century. In fact, by 1805 and *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, it was no longer only *new* philosophy that was a signifier of iniquity, but as one character well versed in the ways of the world laments, 'the very name of philosophy, though originally a very respectable one, now fills me with a sensation of horror which I cannot possibly describe.'<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, the changing uses of the term 'philosophy' are interesting, and although the term was employed differently by individual authors, Charles Lucas' proposition that there ought to be a distinction made between what he calls 'philosophers' -good - and 'PHILOSOPHISTS' - bad - was common, at least implicitly, and is certainly worthy of investigation, though for more than merely etymological reasons.<sup>11</sup> He distinguishes between 'common philosophy' and 'new philosophy' by defining the latter as 'A species of Wisdom, which man discovers by the aid of his own individual powers, corporeal and mental, without owning the aid of any superior Being'.<sup>12</sup> This sounds a rather Burkean criticism (especially if we disregard, for the moment, the religious dimension) with its emphasis on the error of any opinion that sets itself up in opposition to the wisdom of the ages, and one cannot help thinking that for Lucas, the evil was concentrated more in the 'new' than the 'philosophy'. Similarly Burkean concerns are evident in numerous anti-Jacobin novels, new philosophy being responsible for the annihilation of chivalry for instance, although more usually being pressed into service as the symbolic opposite to the 'entailed inheritance' of political and religious institutions which, according to Burke and conservatism as a whole, each

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<sup>10</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc: Containing Some Views of English and Foreign Society* [London, 1805], II, 120. Burges' *Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent*, with its demonisation of Mr PHILOSOPHY and anyone remotely connected with him, even his classical forebears, exhibits the same confident contempt of anything that could call itself by that name, and a toast proposed by the hero of Edmund Marshall's *Edmund and Eleonora: or Memoirs of the Houses of Summerfield and Gretton* [London, 1797], who has just been cured of his paralysis by a local sage's electrical apparatus, makes a similar, snide, point: 'may all philosophers be as useful as the Philosopher of Hawthorn Dale', he proposes, indicting the whole of that once respectable breed (I, 333).

<sup>11</sup> 'Philosophists' are would-be philosophers. Burges, *Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent*, employs this same linguistic variant, her preface insisting that everyone must do their best to fight 'our arch-enemy PHILOSOPHISM' (p.vii), but it is not so common as might be expected, the term 'new philosophy' alone bearing most of the anti-Jacobins' derision.

<sup>12</sup> Lucas, *The Infernal Quixote. A Tale of the Day* [London, 1801], II, 219 and 222-23.

generation had a duty to abide by and preserve.<sup>13</sup> In Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron* (1795?) for instance, one protagonist compliments another on a discourse in defence of the old order with the aid of one of Burke's favourite images: 'you have justly compared the Stability of the British Constitution to the Growth and Firmness of Oaks', contrasting this with the challenge of new philosophy: 'Our freedom was not founded on chimerical Notions, nor spun from Cobweb Systems, but it was formed on Principles which have produced her Safety and Superiority.'<sup>14</sup>

Following Burke, what Thomas and numerous other anti-Jacobin novelists rely upon is a putative 'old philosophy', successful, and thus laudable, by virtue of its evident results (the perfections of the present day), but never actually explained. Since neither this old nor new philosophy was ever defined, the point at issue was merely the newness, the innovation, the wholesale transformation (or deforestation, as Burke might have put it) of the political landscape, something utterly condemnable, and something that comes across well in Thomas Skinner Surr's *George Barnwell* (1798). Surr evidently felt it both inadequate and inappropriate merely to make his new philosopher, Mr Mental, the opposite to Sir James, the local 'squire and 'a whig of the old school, and a high church man', since,

By the opposite to a whig, used to be formerly understood a tory; and by the opposite to high-church, low-church was suggested. Now Mr Mental was neither whig nor tory, nor a high, nor low church-man; yet were his principles more at variance with Sir James than a Jacobite presbyter's: the latter only differed with the knight as to the person of a king and the modes of religion. Mr Mental was supposed to be equally averse to all kings, and to all religion.<sup>15</sup>

A new epoch of iniquity had dawned, and all previous delinquency had apparently been rendered obsolete, but the *new* challenge had no vocabulary of its own, and we clearly see Surr seeking to avoid the necessity of defining what he meant by the new philosophy to which Mental subscribed. His first endeavour as with anti-Jacobinism itself, was to define it in terms of its opposite, and although he admits himself unsuccessful in finding an 'old philosophy' which could form a direct counterpart, he still enlisted

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<sup>13</sup> Burke had lamented that the age of chivalry was gone, that the age of 'sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators' had succeeded, and novelists were pleased to demonstrate that, indeed, chivalry had been basely murdered by new philosophy. In *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, for instance, an elderly soldier is shocked to find that ten thousand swords did not leap from their scabbards to defend the honour of a beautiful young heroine and that he was the only man prepared to escort such a creature out of Revolutionary France: "'In my juvenile days," continued the hoary warrior, "half the garrison of Berlin would have set off at a moment's notice too [*sic*] rescue a weak female from the grasp of a villain; but we are all *philosophised*, I think they call it, and somehow or other we do not win so many battles as we used to do before we were philosophers. There was not talk of philosophy during the late King's wars, and he always contrived to beat the enemy'". Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. VIII, ed. L. G. Mitchell [Oxford, 1989], p.127. Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, II, 256-57.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel. Founded on the French Revolution* [Plymouth, 1795?], I, 157. For an examination of Burke's fascination with the oak metaphor, see Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* [New Haven, Conn., 1983], p.60n.10.

<sup>15</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell. A Novel* [London, 1798], I, 30. Compare a note added by Robert Bisset, in his *Douglas; or, the Highlander* [London, 1800], to his assertion that Scottish presbyterians had lately become new philosophers. Attempting to preempt the objection that they had given their support to neither the 1715 or 1745 rebellions, he also conceives of a wholly new form of revolt: 'the object of that [Jacobite] rebellion was a change of monarchy, not an *abolition of monarchy*,' he says, and 'consequently, did not suit *their principles and views*' (I, 73n).



an already established political lexicon (kings, religion and rebellion), a strategy which remained the only method of proceeding for anti-Jacobins.

In other words, though numerous novels include what seem like attempts to define new philosophy, or provide what appear to be recipes for the manufacture of a new philosopher in their accounts of a character's progress towards his or her iniquity, closer inspection reveals almost all such definitions to be couched purely in negatives. Henry James Pye's description of Sir Edward Eaglefield, the misguided protagonist of *The Aristocrat* (1799), demonstrates this perfectly. A trip to the Continent with his philosophical tutor furnished him with 'a mind amply stored with all the secrets of the new philosophy', merely meaning, we are told, that, 'He could expatiate learnedly on the horrors and inhumanity of war, the bigotry of priests, the tyranny and fraud of governments, the pedantry of ancient learning, and the rude and unpolished manners that disgraced his own countrymen' - not that he had anything to put in its place.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the new philosophy of Charles Lucas' Marmaduke Pendragon, in *The Castle of St. Donats* (1798), though he called himself 'a violent assertor of the cause of freedom, in other words, a democrat upon the French scale', actually consisted only of pretending 'to disbelieve every thing, religious or moral, that did not suit his own turn.' In fact, the metaphysics with which he both entertains and frightens our hero is comprised only of a 'jumble of law terms, political cant, London phrases, pieces of orations heard at the spouting clubs and other public meetings, with gleanings from the playhouse, and extracts from the pamphlets of the day, ... a complete mixture of absurdity, impudence, and folly.'<sup>17</sup> That new philosophy is in fact *no* philosophy is the premise that, as we shall see, underlies the entirety of the anti-Jacobin strategy.

However, three years later, Lucas did decide to venture, if not quite a definition, then a survey of new philosophy, an enterprise that took up almost a hundred pages of his *Infernal Quixote* (1801) and which must be considered as one of the strangest endeavours of the whole anti-Jacobin campaign. He divides the 'infernal quixotes' by whom Europe is beset, and by which he seems to mean new philosophers in both France and Britain, into nine distinct categories, although individual modern philosophers, Lucas points out, may belong to more than one sect. It is a curiously idiosyncratic exercise in taxonomy which seems designed simultaneously to excite the consternation of readers by showing the depth and breadth of the threat they were facing, and to reassure them that, now it was detected, measured and classified, the threat could be neutralised. The apparent comic intent of some of the categories also bespeaks a rather

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<sup>16</sup> Pye, *The Aristocrat. A Novel*, I, 43-44. Likewise we find Eaglefield's twin, Robert Charles Dallas' Lord Chopstone from *Percival, or Nature Vindicated* [London, 1801], another aristocratic new philosopher, schooled by his tutor ('whose philosophy consisted of irreligion, and whose eloquence was the art of wrangling' and with whom 'he went on his travels at a time when the novel doctrines of nature and equality were broached') into attacking every institution of society without suggesting an alternative. His philosophy consisted merely of 'pretending to refer everything to the test of cool reasoning: catching at every word for an argument and ready to maintain either side of a question rather than lose a debate; supporting his position by loudness of voice, and forcing his opinion down your throat in spite of your teeth. Ever pleading for freedom of every kind, yet constantly maintaining a despotic spirit...' (I, 15-16).

<sup>17</sup> Lucas, *Castle of St. Donats; or, the History of Jack Smith* [London, 1798], II, 220.



surprising degree of frivolousness in the satire, making Lucas seem more a sort of literary Gillray than a deeply committed propagandist.

First, he presents to our anxious imagination the 'Stoics or Insensibles', who criticise society as it is and will not have their arguments contradicted. They were soon won over to the Revolutionary cause in France, and almost as soon had their heads cut off. The 'Epicureans', his second category, reject both government and religion because both interfere with the gratification of the senses, the sole purpose of life. There are many men on both sides of the Channel that belong to this sect, including even the Prince Regent, Lucas hints, but, of course, 'There is scarcely a female Philosopher to be found that is not an EPICUREAN.' Next come the 'Peripatetics or Busy Bodies', men, mostly, who dally in new philosophy under the impression that it will make them appear wise or fashionable, or simply because they have nothing else to do. They do not think for themselves, but affect their sympathy with sedition. The 'Virtuosos or lovers of wonder' embrace anything novel or interesting, particularly anything engaging for its antiquity, a description that brings to mind the ancient constitutionalism of some strands of late eighteenth century radicalism but seems more an attack on the dilettantism of a William Beckford or Sir William Hamilton. The category of 'Illuminati or Wiseacres' likewise suggests a serious Jacobin target but falls into more general satire. They think the present generation, that is to say themselves, infinitely wise, and profess a Godwinian faith in the perfectibility of man, but the examples Lucas furnishes us with include, as well as the discernibly 'Jacobin' notion of the possibility of avoiding illness and death by strength of will, a belief in such ideologically neutral projects as vaccination and animal magnetism.<sup>18</sup>

Sixthly in Lucas' scheme come the 'Libertarians or champions of liberty,' contrary figures who, despite their grandiose name, object to anything merely for the sake of objecting; and next are the 'Naturals', evidently inspired by Rousseau, who insist that mankind needs to return to a primitive state. Eighth are the 'Reasoners', anxious to prove everything by logic, always in defiance of common sense, and the category Lucas spends longest considering, partly because 'the leaders of the mob are very partial to them', but mostly because they evidently encompass many of his personal aversions. They have sought to prove both observably Jacobin propositions - that the Hottentots (or the Men in the Moon for that matter) possess the truest religion and most perfect society (Rousseau is half Reasoner and half Natural) - but they have also attempted the less political goals of rationalising speech patterns and proving that St. Mark did not write the gospel whose name it bears.

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<sup>18</sup> Although even these two subjects were not entirely ideologically neutral in the late eighteenth century. A discussion of inoculation occurs in Eliza Parsons' *Woman As She Should Be; or, Memoirs of Mrs Menville. A Novel* [London, 1793] as a test of our heroine's fortitude (IV, 153) and in *Edmund and Eleonora* it seems to be one of the Rev. Edmund Marshall's particular hobby-horses, the two protagonists having both been vaccinated as children and thus symbolically designated for each other (I, 9 and 29). Animal magnetism (hypnotism) was a fashionable pastime, and was practised by the famous Dr Marmaduke (probably not coincidentally the name of Charles Lucas' new philosopher in *Castle of St. Donats*) for the delight of such luminaries as the Duchess of Devonshire. It received criticism as a deplorable vice of the London élite, as in, for instance, Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Animal Magnetism* (1788). Though hardly revolutionary, such activities could be comfortably subsumed into the matrix of Jacobinism as defined by anti-Jacobin propaganda.

Lastly, but most significant, come the 'Nothings', people who believe nothing outwith what they themselves know, who have no principles emanating from any external code, temporal or spiritual. Thus the Nothings may say and do what they like, for, detestably, they have no laws to obey and may alter their conduct by the moment according to nothing but their present exigency. Clearly, this is overtly Godwinian - and his doctrine of 'Necessity' is cited in his own words - but, in fact, Lucas' central contention is that to adopt such a position is to adhere to no philosophy at all. All ambassadors of the French Revolution are Nothings, for instance, because they may argue anything they like according to their present advantage, their words having precisely no bearing on their future conduct, a point explicitly made by Elizabeth Hamilton too, whose villain, Vallaton, expounds a new philosophy which, she laments, is so constantly shifting that it can be neither prosecuted at law nor utterly refuted by even the most learned. As Lucas disgustedly puts it, citing the lifelong maxim of Lord James Marauder, the infernal quixote himself, a man belonging to all of these sects, 'ALL PRINCIPLE IS FOLLY.'<sup>19</sup>

Centrally, Lucas insists that every Jacobin, every new philosopher, will assuredly be a Nothing, to whichever other sect he or she may also belong. All of Lucas' categorisations have been exercises in demonstrating that any new philosophical position is underlaid by either, or both, personal folly or vice sufficient to deny them the status of a legitimate political or metaphysical position, but it is the assertion that none of these doctrines has any basis in fixed principles that does most to undermine their validity, let alone appeal. That new philosophy, however it is dressed, is simply the denial of principle is the conception underlying all anti-Jacobin treatment of it. Every new philosopher, George Walker wrote in the preface to *The Vagabond* (1799), 'has a system widely opposite to the other,' but, he added, all these positions were 'agreeing only that every regular order and institution, religious, moral, and political, is worn out in this age of reason, and must be destroyed.'<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Mary Anne Burges exposed her personification of new philosophy as a shadow with no fixed identity himself but meaning to any individual exactly what would be most likely to coax them into prostrating themselves at the altars of ATHEISM and ANARCHY.<sup>21</sup> New philosophy was the ultimate nihilism, expressing itself simply as the absence of all constraint, a point emphasised over and over again, by Jane West, for one, who deplored the new morality 'which overturns every restraint' and new religion 'that prohibits nothing but devotion', and,

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* [2nd edn., London, 1800], I, 66; Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, II, 297. The Stoics are dealt with, II, 225-32; the Epicureans, II, 232-36; the Peripatetics, II, 237-46; the Virtuosos, II, 246-51; the Illuminati, II, 251-58; the Libertarians, II, 258-62; the Naturals, II, 262-64; the Reasoners, II, 264-84; and the Nothings, II, 284-94. Allene Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel* [New York and London, 1915], pp.150-54, quotes substantial passages from Lucas' survey.

<sup>20</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, I, xi.

<sup>21</sup> Mr PHILOSOPHY, altering his rhetoric to suit his auditor, reveals to Mr DISCONTENT that, if he complies, the present system will be destroyed, to Mr LOVE-CHANGE he says that a new system will immediately appear; to Mr PARTY-SPIRIT he tells how everyone else has already succumbed, and GOOD-INTENT he attempts to entice by appealing to his benevolence - that his submission will bring not only personal enlightenment, but 'the universal establishment of the rights and liberties of all mankind' (p.45). According to his own opinion, Mr PHILOSOPHY would fall, like Rousseau, into the seventh and eighth of Lucas' categories, for he claims to be the child of REASON and NATURE. However, he is later revealed to be the offspring of LUCIFER and NONSENSE (pp.23 and 64-65).

perhaps most impressively, by the author of the Oriental tale, *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day* (1802). Here it is revealed that new philosophy consists only of

a conviction that man is an independent being - that free and unrestrained enjoyment of his will is his right on earth, and the only demonstrable end of his being - that restraint, imposed by, or suffered from, an animal of the same class, argues the most insolent presumption on the one side, and the most contemptible folly on the other ...

and further, that 'As to restraint from a Superior Being,' it is no more than 'an invention of subtle and crafty men, for the purpose of gaining a superiority over their fellow-creatures'.<sup>22</sup> The 'philosophy of the day', in other words, was to deprive mankind of both secular and spiritual statutes, so that each individual might be free to follow nothing but his or her own volition and interest.

Literary anti-Jacobinism, then, did not think of itself as waging a war against ideas, but against a more worrying menace still - the absence of any guiding principle whatsoever. And of course, once new philosophy had been exposed as, in Lucas' phrase, Nothingism, a set of non-principles cobbled together to give the most flimsy of theoretical bases to the desire of malicious individuals to act as they liked without restraint or compunction, a mortal blow was inflicted on each of the individuals cited by authors as part of the heritage of new philosophy, irrespective of what their philosophy might have been. Thus it was that to quote, or to refer to, or even merely to mention, any individual identified as a new philosopher in a novel was to exhibit them as a fraud, charlatan and, generally speaking, as a villain too. So although various anti-Jacobin novelists subpoena numerous new philosophers to stand before the primed and packed jury of their readers, quoting sometimes substantial passages from their works, it is never actually their thought or their works which come under scrutiny. This is a point that cannot be over-emphasised, especially since those few works of modern scholarship which have given some sustained consideration to the anti-Jacobin novel have tended to be taken in by the immediately evident citations of various Jacobin texts and thus driven to suggest that the novels were designed to counter some specific protagonists and tenets of the new philosophy. The two close examinations of George Walker's anti-Jacobin satire, by A. D. Harvey and Hugh H. MacMullen, for example, evaluate his *Vagabond* as primarily a counter-blast to Godwin's *Political Justice* and Rousseau's *Confessions*.<sup>23</sup> This is wholly understandable, since both texts are

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<sup>22</sup> Jane West, *A Tale of the Times* [London, 1799], II, 273. Anon., *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day. An Eastern Tale* [London, 1802], p.76. West's peculiarly religious conception of new philosophy may be worth giving in full: 'The sophists, who in these evil days are falsely called enlightened, affect not to palliate their own vices by pleas of necessity and frailty, whatever disguise they may assume to expedite their success with others. Aspiring to a pre-eminence in impiety, which former times feared to arrogate, they sin upon principle, promulgate systems to justify iniquity, and proscribe repentance by a morality which overturns every restraint, and a religion that prohibits nothing but devotion. Combining Pagan superstitions with the exploded reveries of irrational theorists, they place at the head of their world of chance a supine material god, whom they recognise by the name of Nature, and pretend that its worship supersedes all other laws human and divine. By the side of this circumscribed Deity they erect the idol shrine of its viceregent, Interest; by the monstrous doctrines, that "whatever is profitable is right," that "the end sanctifies the means," and that "human actions ought to be free," they dissolve the bonds of society; and, after conducting their bewildered followers through the mazes of folly and guilt, in search of an unattainable perfection, their views terminate at last in that fallacious opiate which infidelity presents, 'the eternal sleep of death' (II, 272-74).

<sup>23</sup> A. D. Harvey, 'George Walker and the Anti-Revolutionary Novel', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 28 (1977), 290-300; Hugh H. MacMullen, 'The Satire of Walker's *Vagabond* on Rousseau and Godwin', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 52 (March 1937), 215-29. See also Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution* [Oxford, 1993], pp.140-41.



frequently alluded to in the novel, and indeed, it is no misrepresentation for MacMullen to devote most of his article to adducing the references Walker makes to Godwin and Rousseau. To find William Marshall, and other biographers of Godwin, alleging that the anti-Jacobin novels they have come across (and Marshall has identified more than any other scholar) are all specifically 'anti-Godwinian' also comes as no surprise.<sup>24</sup> But it is an approach which misunderstands the underlying method of anti-Jacobin fiction. By looking at many anti-Jacobin novels together, as MacMullen and Harvey did not do, as has not been done before in fact, and by not analysing them purely from the perspective of one or more radicals, the tangential nature of these citations to the main campaign of anti-Jacobin polemic becomes apparent, for, although numerous novels disparagingly quote *Political Justice*, to name just one text, conservative novelists principally aimed to forge an alloy of new philosophy which they then contorted to fit their own purposes.<sup>25</sup> It would be wise, in other words, to place more credence in the only *apparently* disingenuous claims made by even the most venomous anti-Jacobins that, as Robert Bisset put it in the preface to *Douglas* (1800), 'I here declare that it is VICE AND FOLLY IN GENERAL; and not the vice of any individual person, which I have in view' - a sentiment echoed by Elizabeth Hamilton when challenged by her *ci-devant* friend and correspondent Mary Hays about the subjects of the satire of her *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*.<sup>26</sup>

In examining new philosophy in fiction, then, it would be rather tangential simply to list the occurrences of specific rebuttals of individual Jacobins, however much fun it might be to identify the characters that add such colour to the novels with specific radicals from 1790s Britain.<sup>27</sup> Rousseau and

<sup>24</sup> William Marshall, *William Godwin* [New Haven, Conn., 1984], pp.211-33. See also, for example, Ford K. Brown, *The Life of William Godwin* [London, 1926], pp.151-75, and Don Locke, *A fantasy of reason. The life and thought of William Godwin* [London, 1980], pp.113-14 and 148-59.

<sup>25</sup> A sample of the citations of *Political Justice* may be found in Walker's *Vagabond*, I, 123n., Isaac D'Israeli's *Vaurien* [London, 1797], I, 77n. and *Flim-Flams!* [London, 1805], I, 80n., Elizabeth Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers*, I, 74n., Robert Bisset's *Douglas*, III, 84-100, Edward Dubois' *St. Godwin* [London, 1800], p.207n., and *Dorothea; or, A Ray of the New Light* [London, 1801], II, 24n., 29n. and 34n.

<sup>26</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, I, xxiv, and see Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution*, p.143, for a summary of the angry accusations made by Hays that Hamilton had launched an unprovoked attack on her, and Hamilton's arch counter-claims that her satiric portraits were not necessarily life-drawings of Hays, Godwin and their circle.

<sup>27</sup> Identifications that seem reasonably safe are Joseph Priestley as Mr Mental in Surr's *George Barnwell* and as Dr Alogos in Walker's *Vagabond* (from the attacks on their laboratories); Thomas Holcroft as Tom Croft in Bisset's *Douglas* and Mr. Allcraft in Dubois' *St. Godwin* (for obvious reasons), and as Reverberator in D'Israeli's *Vaurien*, according to James Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli* [Oxford, 1969], pp.59-61, who also claims Rant to be John Thelwall (but ducks other identifications by not entirely correctly claiming that 'other characters are fairly easily identified by quotations from their writings'). Ford K. Brown thinks D'Israeli's Dr. Bounce to be Samuel Parr - or possibly Joseph Fawcett - since we are told Bounce was a familiar figure at Old Jewry (*Life of William Godwin*, p.161 and n.), whilst Marilyn Butler thinks him to be Richard Price, presumably for a similar reason (*Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* [Oxford, 1975], p.107). Mary Hays is clearly associated with Bridgetina Botherim in Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers* (by her squint and short stature as well as her principles), although Gary Kelly thinks of her as part Wollstonecraft too (*Women, Writing and Revolution*, p.149), and notes citing *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* also suggest that Gertrude Sinclair in Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* may be based on Hays (I, 36n. and 40n.). Wollstonecraft is evidently Jemima in Bisset's *Modern Literature*, is certainly behind the portrait of Adeline Mowbray in Opie's novel of that name (see Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel* [London, 1986], pp.315-324, for a discussion of this), and seems to be a major part of the inspiration for the Goddess of Reason in Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers* (see Eleanor Ty, 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned: Elizabeth Hamilton's Parodic Novel', *Ariel. A Review of International English Literature*, 22 (October 1991), p.116). According to Earnest Baker, Valloton [sic] in *Modern Philosophers*, with his 'Swiss name', is 'beyond all possibility of mistake' 'a scurrilous caricature of Rousseau' ('The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance', *The History of the English Novel*, V, 254), although Gary Kelly has other, and more convincing ideas (*Women, Writing and Revolution*, p.150). As must be becoming apparent, these attributions may be strained almost to implausibility,



Voltaire, for instance, whose status and influence as philosophers could hardly be denied even by the most vociferous of anti-Jacobins, though often cropping up in the novels, featured as little more than fictional characters. Certainly, it was never any *philosophy* that earned them their place in their novels, but their image, their reputation, grafted onto them by propagandists who might just as well have never read their work, a tendency noticed by historians of the contemporary reception of both Rousseau and Voltaire. Bernard Schilling, in his inquest into *Conservative England and the Case Against Voltaire*, has rather irritably complained that his subject was regarded by British reactionaries as the prime mover of the Revolution in France and the chief inspiration behind all revolutionary activity in Britain, and yet Voltaire had never constructed a new theory of society or demanded the overthrow of the existing order. 'On the contrary,' Schilling protests, 'he was a well-known monarchist and himself distrustful of popular movements, of sudden and violent changes in a social scheme of things that had treated him so generously most of his life.'<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, in his study of *Rousseau in England*, Edward Duffy has made much the same claims for his protagonist, concluding that it was Rousseau, not Voltaire, who 'became an eponym for revolutionary mischief.'<sup>29</sup> Both are equally correct, of course, in claiming for their subjects the status of arch-fiend, for according to the apprehension of most authors and readers of novels, the two philosophers were indistinguishable, and to all intents and purposes the same person, or rather the same demon.<sup>30</sup>

Similar complaints about the abuse of Rousseau's good name are to be found in MacMullen's investigation into the satire of Walker's *Vagabond*. MacMullen seems genuinely surprised by his own conclusion that, 'In general, Walker misunderstands Rousseau; indeed, such misunderstanding seems wilful, based more on Rousseau's reputation than on his actual writings', and he points out that, in fact,

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something shown by the way in which almost every anti-Jacobin character may be said to be a travesty of Godwin. Ford K. Brown and Don Locke, in their biographies of Godwin, are particularly guilty of regarding him as virtually the sole subject of the anti-Jacobin novelists, and end up rather too overzealously charting his 'appearances' in fiction (*Life of William Godwin*, pp.31-32, 119, etc.; *A fantasy of reason*, pp.113-14, 157-59, etc). It is not stretching the bounds of possibility, though, to see him as Stupeo in Walker's *Vagabond* (although this is set c.1780), as Subtile in D'Israeli's *Vaurien* and CACO-NOUS in his *Flim-Flams!*, as Myope in *Modern Philosophers*, as the eponymous anti-hero of *St. Godwin* (although mediated through Godwin's own character, St. Leon), and as Subtlewoud in *Douglas*. However, it is a salutary warning against reading too much significance into these glib identifications that *Douglas* also includes another, separate figure called simply 'Godwin' (e.g. III, 101). We should also bear in mind that in Elizabeth Helme's *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest* [London, 1796], the honest, worthy, and decidedly non-Jacobin country farmer of the title is actually called 'William Godwin' without there being the merest hint of any consciousness of, or correlation with, his real-life namesake.

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Schilling, *Conservative England and the Case Against Voltaire* [New York, 1950], p.296. See especially ch.14, 'Voltaire Convicted', pp.278-95, for a summary of how Voltaire was indicted in Britain as the architect of the Revolution.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England. The Context for Shelley's Critique of the Enlightenment* [Berkeley, Calif. and London, 1979], p.33. See ch.2: 'The Confessions in English Politics', pp.32-53, for a summary of the process by which this was achieved.

<sup>30</sup> In the majority of cases, Rousseau and Voltaire go together like salt and pepper in the Devil's cruet set. Robert Bisset's condemnation of Mary Robinson's novels is typical, for instance, in talking of her 'implicit reception of the doctrines of Voltaire and Rousseau' (*Douglas*, III, 303), and Henry James Pye no less so in talking of 'the school of Rousseau and Voltaire,' who in this case have excited in Sir Edward Eaglefield 'the sanguine hopes of a general melioration of the human race, by the spreading influence of the new philosophy' (*The Aristocrat*, I, 16-17). Elsewhere, even if only one of them is named, they perform exactly the same rôle, generally being summoned up by an author to take the blame for eradicating religion and putting nothing in its place, thereby leading on a weak-willed character or two to suicide -see Charlotte Smith's *Banished Man* [London, 1794], I, 232 and Ann Thomas's *Adolphus de Biron*, I, 5. Occasionally, Rousseau is singled out for particular censure, often because of his ideas, or the perception of his ideas, on 'natural' education, a recurrent subject of the *bildungsroman*: see, for example, Jane West, *The Infidel Father* [London, 1802], I, 82n.

Walker's opinions on, say, nature or the education of women, as he expresses them in the novel, are in exact conformity with Rousseau's.<sup>31</sup> Even the most cursory acquaintance with anti-Jacobin literature reveals this use of reputation not reality to be a universally adopted tactic, whether adopted by authors unconsciously, as seems to be the case with Walker, or deliberately, as was certainly the case with Edmund Burke. Charles Lucas had identified Rousseau as a hybrid 'Natural' and 'Reasoner', and Burke agreed, though concentrating primarily on showing him as a 'Nothingier', devoid of any integrity, any allegiance to even some warped morality of his own. His construction of Rousseau was based not in the least on any close reading of Rousseau, nor even on the licentious and hypocritical vagabond that Rousseau himself had famously revealed in the *Confessions* (1782 and 1789), but was built on the single idea that the Revolutionaries worshipped him as an idol. Burke even admitted that the real Rousseau would have had difficulty recognising what was being done in his name - 'I believe, that were Rousseau alive, and in one of his lucid intervals, he would be shocked at the practical phrenzy of his scholars', Burke had written in the *Reflections*.<sup>32</sup> But this was precisely why such a straw-man was so useful, for he could be made to represent anything the polemicist wished. In Burke's work, the technique was most sustained in the *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* of 1791. Having known Rousseau in England, Burke wrote, he was sure that 'he entertained no principle, either to influence his heart or to guide his understanding' - excepting, that is, the one characteristic that would form the basis of the whole of Burke's attack - 'vanity'.<sup>33</sup> In fact, Burke's conception of vanity - which he defines as 'the worst of vices' leaving 'the whole man false' and 'nothing sincere or trustworthy about him' - is identical to Lucas' 'Nothingism'. But more significantly here, it was this strategy of attacking the man, not the philosophy that underpinned all of Burke's offensive. As Duffy puts it, 'Once Burke had uncovered Rousseau's ruling passion, he needs address himself neither to the substance of Rousseau's thought nor to the quality and sincerity of his intentions'.<sup>34</sup>

Burke's strategy, then, was something of a paradox, though not inhibiting its potency in the least. His was an *ad hominem* attack on Rousseau, but not an attack on a real person, rather on a straw-man of his own creation, deliberately designed only as the perfect target for his contempt. In most anti-Jacobin novels we see the same technique in operation, attacks on new philosophers rather than new philosophy, but on artificially fabricated figures bearing little relation to their ostensible models. This was a perfect technique for novelists, greatly facilitating their attempts to attack new philosophy whilst never actually engaging in debate on its ideas and issues. They attacked, as satirical novelists had always done, individual characters, either as fools or knaves, and by creating their own new philosophers, they were

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<sup>31</sup> MacMullen, 'The Satire of Walker's *Vagabond*', pp.217 and 216-18.

<sup>32</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 219.

<sup>33</sup> Edmund Burke, *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791) in *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 314. Duffy notes that fully a fifth of this *Letter* is devoted to the assault on Rousseau (*Rousseau in England*, p.38), although Burke himself suggests that the Revolutionaries might almost as well have chosen Voltaire (VIII, 313).

<sup>34</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 313. Duffy, *Rousseau in England*, p.41.

free to construct new philosophy in its most vulnerable form. New philosophy was created as an amalgam of insidious ideas, separate strands of which could be apportioned by anti-Jacobins to individual characters selected to act as vehicles to drive a putative Jacobin principle before the guns of the novelists. This strategy meant that they could combine their central aim of showing new philosophy to be nothing but Nothingism, a non-philosophy, while simultaneously displaying and, by disproving, debunking some individual radical propositions as they were held by their phantom new philosophers.

Having now examined, at base, what new philosophy in the anti-Jacobin novel was *not*, for it was neither a genuine political philosophy nor, as some critics have suggested, the travestied ideas of any individual exponent of radicalism, we can now turn to the question of what it actually was that drew most of the anti-Jacobins' fire. In the sections that follow, then, I shall be examining some of the specific arguments selected by anti-Jacobins to be extracted from the amalgam for attack, and then, how it was that they went about doing it.

## 2 *New philosophy unmasked*

Anti-Jacobins deplored any semblance of debate in fiction not simply because they felt it dangerous to open up the possibility of doubt and disputation amongst the innocents they imagined to be reading novels, nor only because the novelists themselves felt unwilling, on the grounds of either propriety or profitability, to interrupt their fiction with such stuff. Most of all, they felt that debate, questioning, and ratiocination, were the very tools of the Jacobins and the hallmarks of their new philosophy. Just as new philosophy was invented, whereas its putative counterpart, the old philosophy, was inherited, so new philosophy was reasoned, whilst old philosophy was felt. Both points had been postulated most influentially by Burke, but the novel, and its picaresque variety in particular, might almost have been designed to elucidate the divide. *The History of Sir George Warrington; or the Political Quixote* (1797), for just one example, is fundamentally based on these simple premises - that Sir George is born into a world that functions perfectly and benefits everyone, but is driven by some mischievous impulse to attempt to overhaul it all and reconstruct it in some unworkable form - here according to the dictates of new philosophy - and that, from the beginning, he has instinctively known in his heart what is right, but that he is temporarily enslaved by the errors of false reasoning.<sup>35</sup> The same pattern is repeated in *Dorothea; or, A Ray of the New Light*, Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, Walker's *Vagabond* and, for that matter,

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<sup>35</sup> Throughout the novel Sir George's heart-felt rectitude is struggling to get our from behind his rationally-imposed Jacobinism. The motif most usually used to show this is his donation of alms, in spite of his better judgement, to the victims of his fellow new philosophers' hypocritical cruelty (e.g. I, 194-204 and II, 4-5). Most of the other new philosophers in the novel are also duped fools rather than designing knaves though, and we are occasionally vouchsafed glimpses of the contrition of figures like Mr Wilmot for the ridiculous causes 'which in his heart he had never approved, though he allowed its justice' (III, 51).



his *Theodore Cyphon* (1796), seemingly a novel inspired by Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, but still critical of any character who privileges reason over feeling.<sup>36</sup>

In *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy* (1798), Sophia King makes the distinction crystal clear as she shows us the fall of her protagonist from innocence, in which he 'never appealed to his reason' and 'at all times obeyed the impulses of his heart, which he thought could never mislead him', to guilty compliance with the murderous schemes of the new philosopher Herdi Lok, resulting from Lok's remorseless and insidious instruction:

You should appeal to your own *reason* for approbation; the *heart* is but secondary, and ought to be in a state of subordination. Your judgement can never be wrong. Reason is never erroneous, but *false* sentiment may be your destruction. You are influenced by a set of chimerical notions of probity and honour; but this is the effect of romance; you will soon discriminate *better*, and think differently.<sup>37</sup>

Of course, King was relying upon the understanding that Lok was entirely wrong, her point being that reasoning, in fact, could be, and almost always was, mistaken, whilst one's feelings were invariably right, disastrous effects being bound to ensue if they were ignored. 'Waldorf,' says Helena, another victim of Lok, at the end of the novel, 'I expiate my crimes by sinking into an early grave ... Oh! that philosophy, ... *betrayed* my heart, and *enslaved* my reason.'<sup>38</sup>

The other pre-understood contention behind King's irony was that for Lok to call that wisdom which is felt, and the equally Burkean notion of honour, 'chimerical', was the most glaring case possible of the pot calling the kettle black. It was certainly an awareness that King must have been able to presume existed in her readers, for the word almost belonged to the anti-Jacobins, so often were they to be found using it to describe new philosophy. It was their central contention that new philosophy was a process of systemisation which ran against the grain of real life, and yet, however utterly delusive it was in reality, it was something that was attractive enough to appeal to a picaresque character, and by extension to the posited readers who required the novelist's didacticism precisely because they were also tempted by the new doctrines. In D'Israeli's *Vaurien*, for example, our by-and-large sensible hero is beguiled by the circle of new philosophers gathered at Lord Belfield's house by their just conceivably noble attempt mathematically to systematise morality. His resistance is based on his love for the teachings of Christ in fact, but D'Israeli designs his *reductio ad absurdum* to excite our scorn for these philosophers by showing us the utter ludicrousness of such an attempt to impose from without a new system to explain a code of

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<sup>36</sup> Theodore has rationally convinced himself that he might murder his tyrannous uncle, but, having done the deed, his heart rebels and he lives on in perpetual guilt. Walker, *Theodore Cyphon; or, the Benevolent Jew* [London, 1796], II, 98.

<sup>37</sup> King, *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy. A Philosophical Tale* [London, 1798], I, 46 and 74. The relationship between sensibility and Jacobinism is vexed, and is open to various interpretations. Lok clearly detests it as an obstacle to winning converts to his new philosophy ('...you have too much sensibility, and are the dupe of false sentiments,' Lok continually tells Waldorf, 'your sensibility is a *traitor* that murders your peace ; your reason is *suborned*, and your judgement is duped by your feelings;' [I, 101]), but other anti-Jacobins regard sensibility, at least in an exaggerated form, as a Jacobin trait - concern for a suffering bird, say, or affected tears at the theatre, diverting attention from real distress in exactly the same way as new philosophy fabricates false grievances at the expense of genuine cases in which reform is needed.

<sup>38</sup> King, *Waldorf*, II, 199-200.



conduct which already exists and has worked so well for so long.<sup>39</sup> *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day* is even more explicit in depicting the prince, its hero and our representative, torn between his two counsellors, Ayoub (apparently meant to stand for Pitt), who 'reasoned like a man who, to profound knowledge, added all that a long and most attentive observation of mankind could bestow', and Ibrahim (possibly Fox), who 'argued not so much from that which did, as that which ought to exist'. Being young, and idealistic (two characteristics generally associated with novel-readers), Massouf 'beheld in the speculations of Ibrahim a cure for those errors which Ayoub acknowledged ... and thus all that could be deduced from experience was exploded'. It takes the strange but edifying dream that fills the rest of the novel, a vision of a land where the new philosophy has taken root and brought nothing but confusion, misery, and eventually revolution, to convince the prince of his error.<sup>40</sup>

As may be again seen from these instances, new philosophy was generally presented by novelists as some kind of chimerical *programme*, with few if any individual elements specified. It is possible, though, to dissect new philosophy, and isolate some of its main organising principles, although we should be wary when attempting this, since, as I have been stressing, new philosophy was an amalgam, seldom precise in the accusations it was levelling, especially when the anti-Jacobin novel is considered as a genre rather than a number of individual texts. Occasionally, some particular popinjays are very evidently brought forward, but they were always placed against this background of the ridiculous and unworkable system, always understood as impracticable, however iniquitous a specific tenet of the doctrine, once isolated, might be seen to be. And, of course, it should also be recognised that when specific articles of new philosophy were brought to the readers' attention, it was not to be reasoned against, but to be dismissed without recourse to debate.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, I, 32-41. The same point is made more concisely by Thomas Love Peacock in his epigraph to *Headlong Hall* [1816; rpt. Oxford, 1987, ed. Michael Baron and Michael Slater]: 'All philosophers, who find/Some favourite system to their mind./In every point to make it fit,/Will force all nature to submit.' That only some of the 'systems' that Peacock satirises could be described as 'Jacobin' should remind us that these techniques employed by the anti-Jacobin novelists were neither new nor necessarily to reach their apogee in conservative propaganda.

<sup>40</sup> Anon., *Massouf*, pp.29 and 31.

<sup>41</sup> Very occasionally a piece of direct anti-Jacobin ratiocination designed to disprove a particular radical idea did appear, and interestingly, it was generally in the work of the least polemical and the most genuinely ideologically anxious authors, for example, Charles Lloyd, who had exhibited a degree of support for ideas of pantisocracy and even Godwinian perfectibility in his early life. Even the novel, *Edmund Oliver* [Bristol, 1798], that he appears to have written partially to clear his name of this Jacobin tarnish, though evidently anti-Jacobin in most respects, was open to accusations of radicalism, which it duly received from the *Anti-Jacobin Review* (see Burton R. Pollin, 'Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd as Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins' in *Studies in Romanticism*, 11 (1973), 633-47). Perhaps the zeal of the convert, or a lingering confusion over where he stood on certain issue, might explain why certain passages of *Edmund Oliver* seem out of step with the main thrust of anti-Jacobin fiction by attempting to refute individual pieces of new philosophy. At one point, for instance, a sensible character takes on a sceptical new philosopher: 'Is it not a favourite opinion with modern philosophers, that virtue being an affair of calculation, (which I allow it to be) he who is susceptible to the most vivid impression - of the greatest extent of ideas - and of the quickest association (being the best calculator) will be the most virtuous man? - But in this mode of reasoning, my friend, one circumstance seems entirely overlooked. In this world, and in the perfect state of society, a man is as liable to receive perverting impressions - impressions tending to error and vice, as virtuous and just ones - and the most susceptible minds are in the most perilous situation - my criterion therefore of virtue would not be extent of mental dimension, but undebauchedness, and simplicity of taste, and sincerity of intention' (II, 103-104). Isaac D'Israeli's *Flim-Flams!* also satirises a specific episode from Godwin - the Godwinian CACO-NOUS recommending infanticide as a check to population growth, a direct attack on Godwin's rejoinder to Thomas Malthus (1st edn., III, 140) - but D'Israeli handles this almost as a flippant pasquinade amongst acquaintances in literary London rather than a reasoned criticism of a particular Jacobin tenet. For a summary of the dispute, see Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin*, p.232.

Edward Dubois, author of the somewhat blatant *St. Godwin* (1800), might provide as good a starting point as any. His new philosophy was principally Godwin's doctrine of necessity, or at least this was what he chose to exhibit to his readers as the target for his satire.<sup>42</sup> But though named several times and supported with quotations and footnoted references to *Political Justice*, Godwin's doctrines do not feature as a coherent philosophical position, but only insofar as they sanction the abominable crimes perpetrated thus far in the novel both by and upon St. Godwin. Locked in the Bastille, he muses thus:

Here it was that I first formed my notions, which I afterwards promulgated in England, of *absolute necessity* presiding over all the actions of men. Upon this ground, I cordially forgave his majesty [the King of France] for taking away my liberty, because I knew he could not avoid it; and I now, also, freely pardoned the mountaineers who had robbed and endeavoured to kill me, as I firmly believe that "the assassin cannot help the murder he commits, any more than the dagger." My marriage with Pandora [his son's fiancée] I ascribed to the *divinity of necessity*, or I should have been very much ashamed for having committed such a fraudulent act.<sup>43</sup>

In Isaac D'Israeli's *Vaurien*, *Political Justice* again forms the central text of new philosophy, featuring as Subtile's projected work 'Prejudices Destroyed, or Paradoxes Proved', but it is not 'necessity' that attracts his indignation, but the decline of manners should the 'age of reason' arrive - for no-one then will keep promises, refrain from crime, nor ever be grateful.<sup>44</sup>

Illustrating another, also pivotal, anti-Jacobin conception of new philosophy, and for comic effect too, D'Israeli emphasises the wealthy Lord Belfield's objections to the new philosophy that he wishes to patronise. Belfield cannot brook the redistribution of property which his friends hold as a fundamental tenet of their doctrine - until, that is, they realise that they might lose a bountiful patron by clinging to their opinion on this matter, and, of course, conviction was not a word in their lexicon. D'Israeli's elevation of economic levelling as part of his definition of what constituted new philosophy was a focus shared by many authors. Although she later widened her sights, Elizabeth Hamilton in her *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796), for instance, clearly understood new philosophy as little more than 'levelling', that is to say the authorisation of theft by approval of the principle of equality. The episode which forms her central attack on the folly of Sir Caprice Ardent, Mr Axiom and Dr Sceptic, the accusation and charging of Timothy Trundle for theft, and his plea that he was simply putting into practice the principles he had heard his master express, convincingly distils new philosophy into levelling only, whilst still indicting any code of behaviour which privileges reasoned challenge to the *status quo* over felt acquiescence.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Gary Kelly, in his *The English Jacobin Novel*, has also concentrated on Godwinian Necessity as the underlying and unifying creed of radical novelists (*passim*, especially pp.15-16).

<sup>43</sup> A note adds that, should we be incredulous that Godwin could have written that the assassin was no more culpable for murder than his weapon, we examine p.689 of *Political Justice* and 'See an excellent Review of this work in the British Critic, v.I, p.307.' Dubois, *St. Godwin*, pp.206-207 and 207n.

<sup>44</sup> D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, I, 71-84.

<sup>45</sup> Hamilton, *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* [1796; London, 1801], II, 191-205.

Levelling was obviously a crucial part of anyone's conception of new philosophy. But if this was the threat of Paine's *Rights of Man* transliterated into fiction, then there were numerous authors who concentrated more on the menace of his *Age of Reason*. Certainly, in Thomas Skinner Surr's *George Barnwell*, levelling appears less prominently than that other pillar of the new philosophy, atheism. What strikes the reader after a short acquaintance with a few new philosophers, though, is that the specific object of the attack is almost irrelevant, levelling or irreligion being virtually interchangeable. Compare the language of Hamilton's Axiom defending theft of property, say, who insists 'I absolutely deny the existence of crime in any case whatsoever ... What is by the vulgar erroneously called so, is, in the enlightened eye of philosophy, nothing more than an error in judgement' and his questioning, 'what is right? what is wrong? what is vice? what is virtue? but terms merely relative, and which are to be applied by the standards of man's own reason', with Surr's Mr Mental giving his different new philosophic credentials:

What is religion - but ceremony, or a set of ceremonies: - what are ceremonies, but superstition! For instance; how absurd, how degrading to a human being, with faculties so comprehensive that all nature bows before him, to which she unfolds her secrets and submits her laws - I say then it must be beneath the dignity of such a creature to bend his knees, to bow his head, and mumble syllables of absurdities strung together centuries ago, when, by the exercise of his own powers, he might be introduced into the arena of great Nature herself.<sup>46</sup>

Certainly, all new philosophy shared this defining presumptuous arrogance, whatever its specific tenets might be. But, in the sphere of religion at least, we should not brush over the fact that there were actually observable gradations and variations from novel to novel.

Not all new philosophers, we find, adopted the atheism of Paine, but might come from the mould of a Price or Priestley, attempting to conciliate their politics with their faith. This usually received short-shrift from the novelists who introduced such characters. Mrs Nicknack, a character in Bisset's *Modern Literature*, for instance, is singled out amongst Bath society for being 'a most furious democrat' but still, we are told, 'says she is a Christian'. This cannot be, remarks our hero, for he cannot recollect any passages of sacred writ that inculcate the faults of which she is so manifestly guilty (only one of which seems political): 'greed, gossiping, disloyalty, lying, and slandering'.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, in his *Douglas* of four years earlier, Bisset had taken pains to conjoin religion and new philosophy, presenting us with a preacher, variously called a Methodist and a 'seceder', who promulgates not only general licentiousness but also levelling, glorying in a mid-seventeenth century idyll when there was no king, no bishops and, as he tells it, no inequality of property.<sup>48</sup> These 'seceders' acknowledge no earthly head of the church, reject

<sup>46</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 200-201 and Surr, *George Barnwell*, I, 36-37.

<sup>47</sup> Bisset, *Modern Literature*, III, 85-86.

<sup>48</sup> 'Property is a present very unequally divided, and far be it fra me to condemn those who try to correct its inequality. If the inhabitants of Portland Place and Bedford Square, just by here, ha maire than many of their neighbours, I can see na harm in these neighbours in trying to get some of its in their ain possession. There was a time when the Sants [Saints] in this island amaist got the land and siller [silver] into their ain hands, where it ought to be. These were the glorious days when the independents triumphed.

the possibility of justification by works, and are firmly committed to predestination (and, curiously, 'the methodist doctrines of the new birth'), and we are left in no doubt that even this purely theological stance places them within the Jacobin ambit. 'Their political principles are as absurd as their religious,' our hero learns, 'and, if not well watched, would be very dangerous' - a conflation which supports Gary Kelly's contention that "'Necessitarianism" was often seen as a secular version of Calvinist predestination'.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the metaphysical similarities between a political philosophy that contended that all actions and motives had their basis in external conditions, and a theology that insisted justification came through faith alone, may have passed most novelists by, but Kelly's suggestion is nevertheless supported by a number of novels, especially if Methodism is conjoined with Calvinism, as it seems often to have been. Roger O'Rourke in *Modern Literature* passed himself off as a strict Methodist and new philosopher alternately, whereas Mr Myope, in *Modern Philosophers*, had been, Hamilton reveals, just as zealous an advocate for Quakerism, Anabaptism and Calvinism before acquiring his new philosophical enlightenment.<sup>50</sup>

Attempts to demonstrate the affinity of new philosophy and religious 'enthusiasm', a catch-all phrase that could mean anything from Calvinism to Methodism to Evangelicalism, anything that was not the conservative Arminianism of the Church of England, reached their apogee with Sarah Green's *The Reformist!!!* (1810), and secondly, 'Rattle's Double Oration', a celebrated section of Charles Lucas' *Infernal Quixote* (1801). Green's novel, echoing Robert Graves' *Spiritual Quixote* of 1773, charts the progress of another Methodist picaresque hero, censuring at first his religion and then, once the folly of that has been shown, and he switches enthusiasms, the campaign for political reform he takes up in London. He has, we are told at the beginning of the novel, 'a head crammed with wild and Utopian schemes for the future welfare and virtue of mankind', and it was a description that applied equally to both of his foolish fixations.<sup>51</sup> 'Rattle's Double Oration' crammed the same message into just three duodecimo pages. Supposedly a paper given to Mr Rattle, a member of a new philosophical coterie that Wilson, Lucas' hero, encounters in London, the 'oration' is a short speech apparently designed to rouse rabble by igniting either their revolutionary or spiritual ardour. The orator may start either with 'Satan and his imps of darkness...', or 'Tyrants and their ministers of tyranny...', and thereafter, though most of the text is the same for the Methodist or Jacobin reading, every sentence or so, the reader must delete whichever phrase does not relate to his or her theme, and insert that which does. Thus, the orator addresses either his or her 'beloved Brethren' or 'beloved Citizens', encourages them to don the 'garments of Hope' and 'shield of

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These were the days when the solemn league and coovenant, the glory of seceders, independents, and levellers of property, and rank, and dignity flourished.' Bisset, *Douglas*, II, 66-67.

<sup>49</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, I, 72; Kelly, *Women, Writing and Counter-Revolution*, p.149. Bisset makes the link most explicit, with his Presbyterian preacher contending that grace having been granted to the Saints, they need take no notice of the ordinary rules of polite society: 'as to the lusts of the flesh; I wanna say that the *Sants* dinna indulge in there as much as other folk, but then what dis it signify what they do with their impure bodies, so that they keep the sowls [*sic*] pure from unbelief...' (II, 65-66).

<sup>50</sup> Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, I, 331-34.

<sup>51</sup> Sarah G\*\*\*\* [i.e. Green], *The Reformist!!! A Serio-comic political novel* [London, 1810], I, 36.



Grace' or 'cap of Liberty' and 'shield of equality' and to pull down either the 'Temples of Satan and his Gang' or the 'Mansions of Kings and Nobles'.<sup>52</sup>

Although Rattle's Oration has something of the character of an authorial *jeu d'esprit*, of which Lucas was so proud that he engineered an opportunity to present it in his novel, its point is obvious. But if Lucas and others had been keen to show the similarities between political and religious enthusiasm in effect, in *George Barnwell*, more intriguingly, Surr shows their *causes* to be the same too. Mr Mental himself, telling his life story to George, revealed how he had fallen into new philosophy, demonstrating it to be the direct consequence of the harsh apprenticeship served under the ultra-Calvinist Mr Nutting. The Calvinist texts being the only spirited material in the libraries to which Mental had access, he quickly learned to espouse and profess their tenets, and from there it was but a short step to a debating club, scepticism, and finally, atheism. Had Mental not been shown religion 'in so distorted a shape', George concludes, he would never have plunged into the rest of his errors.<sup>53</sup> Though we should not forget that Mental is to an extent modelled on Priestley, we should also remember that Godwin had had a zealously Calvinist upbringing, had been educated at a Calvinist academy, and had been a Dissenting minister, and an itinerant one at that, for much of his early life, and that it is his example that underwrites these incarnations of a non-secular new philosophy.

But there was one angle on new philosophy that had a wider currency in anti-Jacobin fiction that any of even these few most prominent strands of new philosophy. If Jacobinism was distilled into new philosophy in the novels, then new philosophy was distilled into essentially an attack on the affectional relations between individuals in society, relations manifested in the institutions of marriage, parental duty, and filial devotion, all areas, of course, which might immediately be identified as falling within the natural province of the novel. Closely examining Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* (1798), for instance, it is rather surprising how quickly his conception of new philosophy, at first given only very loosely, resolves itself into a revelation of its real target. 'The following pages,' his 'Advertisement' asserts in traditionally inexplicit, not to say meaningless, terms, 'were written with the design of counteracting that generalising spirit, which seems so much to have insinuated itself among modern philosophers'. But even before the novel proper has begun, he has explained that it is the 'introduction of concubinage' and 'rejection of cohabitation' to which he specifically objects, for, he says, these evils will lead to 'a callousness that spurns all affections' and can only destroy society.<sup>54</sup> When the narrative itself does get underway, it loses no time in exemplifying this distillation of new philosophy into nothing but a potentially catastrophic attack on the family. We soon meet Lady Sinclair bringing all the artillery of the new philosophy she has learned by rote to bear on winning Edmund as her lover, not her husband (although even that brazenness would be

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<sup>52</sup> Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, II, 178-81. The Oration is quoted at length in Allene Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel*, pp.177-78.

<sup>53</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, I, 62-96, 161-64 and 179.

<sup>54</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, I, vii and vii-viii.

bad enough), and concurrently endeavouring to rid him of a second emotional scruple, his deference to his family's wishes. 'Let us not be swayed by prejudice!' she tells him,

You talk of the suffering of your parents, of the alienation of your connections; what are these parents, these connections to you? Are they more or less than human beings? surely not! Are their errors then, interfering with grand and general principles, which, unaccustomed to rank and station, respect all human beings alike, are these errors to be attended to? Are you to forget the indefinite and incalculable benefit that you will be of to society by trampling on the rubbish which fills the onward path of man, directing you eye singly to the distant horizon of human perfection?

When, just a few pages later, having broken up Edmund's family, Lady Sinclair uses more Godwinian new philosophy to justify her having switched her affections to another ('an irresistible necessity governs us; it is weakness to dream of what might have been;'), even quoting chunks of new philosophical texts to support her case (everyone 'should be "governed by the light of circumstance flashed on an independent intellect;"'), Lloyd has underscored his point and proved that the central aim of the new philosophy as produced by Godwin and his cohorts was nothing more than this destruction of all lawful affectional relationships.<sup>55</sup>

We find the same contention in most other anti-Jacobin novels, generally very clearly, as in Jane West's *Infidel Father* (1802). There we see the eponymous new philosophical Lord Glanville bitterly regretting having educated his daughter Caroline 'to despise prescription, to think and act for herself', and to insist on what he had called her 'natural right to bestow herself on whom she pleased', for she now intends to use those spurious rights to marry, to Glanville's detestation, a 'knight of industry' who will, of course, prove her ruin. Only once they elope, and Caroline is driven to suicide, does Glanville realise the full implications of his own demolition of the principle of filial duty.<sup>56</sup> A few other examples will suffice. In *Douglas*, when Charles investigates the motives behind the new philosophy of a provincial barber, he finds it to be that he is bored with his wife and is partial to his friend's.<sup>57</sup> In Walker's *Vagabond*, the severest reprehension is reserved for a character called Mary, and evidently drawing her arguments from Wollstonecraft, who strikes at the very roots of the family and the traditional rôle of women in society, by

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<sup>55</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, I, 35-36, 122-23 and 124.

<sup>56</sup> West, *Infidel Father*, I, 269-70 and II, 221. Lord Glanville imagines how Caroline would respond if he tried to interfere in her choice: 'You have taught me, that nature and feeling are ever right in their decisions; and you wish me to obey the vitiated laws of custom and general opinion. You have convinced me, that I possess inherent independence; and now you would enforce my submission to parental authority, an abuse which you have often told me was derived from misconception, fostered by priestcraft, and submitted to by childish imbecility. You taught me, that my sex should pursue perfection by strengthening our passions at the expense of our vanity, and now you require me to sacrifice that most exalted of the passions, to what I esteem the corrupt habits of society. ... You have taught me to see and to judge for myself: you have told me that by adopting general opinions I should become the slave of prejudice, and that experience never made anything but automatons. Adhere to your own precepts. As a human being I owe you universal philanthropy; nay, I will go further, I will be tender of your prejudices; but it is upon the condition that you respect mine. If not, all ties between us are dissolved, and hostilities must commence' (I, 270-72).

<sup>57</sup> '[I]f a man and woman has a fancy for one another they has a right to please themselves, be G--', says Mr Shave, 'I think this is one of their best doctrines, for our Dorothy is not the woman she was when I married her, and I like neibour [sic] Stave's wife much better than I do her, for we that is *losophers* don't mind your commandments and their d--n stuff,' Bisset, *Douglas*, II, 143.

earnestly wishing that women did not have to bear and rear children.<sup>58</sup> In *The Infernal Quixote*, we find Lucas once more tying together religious and political enthusiasm, this time by suggesting that they both aimed to dismantle the family. 'Enthusiasm is deaf to all the calls of nature,' he quotes from *The Spiritual Quixote*, before updating Graves' anxiety for the early 1800s with 'Did not the wretches of France boast the murder of fathers, brothers and sons? Does not Godwin renounce those ties?'<sup>59</sup>

What must be clear is that to attribute to new philosophy, and to Godwin in particular, an attack on the familial affections, was really something much more than a distillation of its tenets, or a selective reading and regurgitation. It was a substantial misrepresentation - not that any anti-Jacobin would have had any compunction about so doing - to distil Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793), say, all eight books of its ramblings across hundreds of subjects, into nothing more than an assault on the family and its central institution, marriage. All Godwin had tentatively suggested, in the appendix to one chapter of one book, was that 'The abolition of the present system of marriage appears to involve no evils', but numerous novelists contrived to imbue this speculation with such significance that it could serve as the peg on which all their attacks on Jacobinism and new philosophy could hang, and Godwin continued to be cast as the murderer of any and all familial attachments.<sup>60</sup> Assertions that he was the unstinting enemy to all family values are commonplace, not to say conventional. In *Dorothea*, for instance, he is cited as the inspiration for the heroine's rejection of the 'prejudice' of filial duty and affection; in *Douglas* many lengthy notes quote *Political Justice* as the motivation for a Mr Sidney's desertion of his mistress once she has borne him a child and demanded that he fulfil his private promise and marry her; and in *Modern Literature* we hear the comments of the female circle of new philosophers who cannot believe anyone inducted as 'a disciple of Jemima [Wollstonecraft], and a votary of St. Leon [Godwin]' would ever consider entering into the 'shameful aristocratic monopoly' of marriage, even with so charming a man as Bisset's hero, Charles.<sup>61</sup>

Of course, this remarkably propitious piece of casting was not wholly an achievement of writers of conservative fiction. As has often been pointed out, it was Burke, before *Political Justice*, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* whose apostrophe to Marie-Antoinette and treatment of Louis XVI as father to both his household and the nation, so powerfully portrayed the Revolution as a threat to the family, and in particular to women within it or temporarily outside it.<sup>62</sup> And Burke's prophecies must have seemed justified when British radicalism in the '90s, especially as expressed by those who incorporated it into their fiction, apparently began to assail the traditional structures of the family, and in

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<sup>58</sup> "Oh!" cried she, one day to me, in a fit of enthusiasm, "what signifies all the freedom of our souls, all the exultation of our intellects, if we are to be confined for months to carry a burden which we have no means to lay down, and when the little wretch appears in the world, what a dreadful idea - with intellects that soar beyond the firmament, are we to be confined to swaddle and dandle an animal that has no ideas and must at every moment destroy itself if we do not preserve it? Oh horrid! that Nature did not provide some middle, some stupid, lumpish being, to rear and take care of the human progeny." Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 180-81.

<sup>59</sup> Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, II, 176.

<sup>60</sup> Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. Isaac Kramnick [London, 1985], 'Appendix' to bk. VIII, ch. viii, p.763.

<sup>61</sup> Anon., *Dorothea*, I, 109n.; Bisset, *Douglas*, III, 84-100; and Bisset, *Modern Literature*, III, 204-205.

<sup>62</sup> See Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)*, pp.60-64, for a discussion of Burke's use of this image, and Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* [1992; London, 1994], pp.253-56, who testifies to its impact on British women.

particular the rôle of women in society. Both the lives and works of Hays and Wollstonecraft, for instance, appeared to refine new philosophy into attacks on marriage and the family, and to sabotage the domestic, private, and generally submissive rôle of women so central to the conservative paradigm. It was anti-Jacobin novelists, though, who took it upon themselves to extract from new philosophy those parts which they could assert were demonstrably aimed at eradicating established patterns of female behaviour. They seized on Wollstonecraft's life-story, with her sensuality apparently getting its deserts in her death in childbirth, as a gift to their cause, although, as Kathryn Sutherland has pointed out, Godwin's posthumous memoirs of Wollstonecraft must take much of the responsibility for privileging her life over her writings.<sup>63</sup> They would have found more difficulty with her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, with its disarmingly orthodox views on women in society (at least in many of its concerns), but were spared having to read it, and admit its moderation, by Hays' *Emma Courtney* with its more obvious, and more vulnerable, demands for the sexual and political emancipation of women.<sup>64</sup> And both Wollstonecraft and Hays figure as Godwin's eminently proficient lieutenants in the campaign against the affectional bonds of society envisaged by the anti-Jacobins, many novelists indeed preferring to target them than him. Charles Lloyd, for one, although the 'Advertisement' to *Edmund Oliver* had referred the reader to Godwin's *Enquirer*, cited Mary Hays' *Emma Courtney*, rather than *Political Justice*, in support of his reading of new philosophy, and Elizabeth Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers* was a satire dedicated primarily to ridiculing Hays as Bridgetina Botherim. It was an unsurprising modulation since, whether Hays' novel was supporting or, as has recently been argued by Marilyn Brooks, to a certain extent challenging Godwin's political philosophy, it was she who imbued his principles with an emotional content and who brought much that remained identifiably Godwinian within the compass of the novelist's pen, at least as far as her contemporary reception was concerned.<sup>65</sup>

The response of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* to *Emma Courtney* definitely understood the reworking of new philosophy that was taking place in the late '90s. Its rhetorical question about whether 'women should be so brought up to make them dutiful daughters, affectionate wives, tender mothers, and good

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<sup>63</sup> See especially *Dorothea*, which adduces Wollstonecraft's life, as related in Godwin's posthumous memoirs of her, as 'the obvious comment on the prevailing doctrines'. Having exhibited her supposed wretchedness, suicidal tendencies, wasted talents, untimely death, and unmourned passing, our author asks 'Oh! who would imitate Mary Wolstoncroft [sic]', adding 'Oh, my countrywomen, be warned by her fate' (I, 151, 149, 150). See also Charles Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, 71-71, for a licentious rake's glorification of her life story, which he uses for the seduction of a young woman, and Bisset's *Douglas*, in which we are told that Wollstonecraft [sic], though Godwin thought 'she was born to give a new impulse to female manners', 'really did no more than stimulate the old impulse, which made so may in all ages and countries disregard chastity' (IV, 87). Such readings of Wollstonecraft surely support Sutherland's opinion that Godwin's publication of *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), by exposing her life as that by which she would be known, severely prejudiced the reception of her work. 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism', in *Revolution in Writing. British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, ed. Kelvin Everest [Milton Keynes, 1991], p.34.

<sup>64</sup> When Elizabeth Hamilton actually considers Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, she finds it an antidote to Rousseau's much worse views of women but regrets that it is a 'Pity that the very sensible authoress has sometimes permitted her zeal to hurry her into expressions which have raised a prejudice against the whole.' *Modern Philosophers*, I, 196.

<sup>65</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, I, vii, 36n and 40n. I am grateful to Marilyn Brooks for allowing me to see early drafts of parts of her forthcoming biographical and critical studies of Hays. See also her 'A Critical Study of the Writings of Mary Hays, With an Edition of her Unpublished Letters to William Godwin', unpublished Ph.D. thesis [University of London, 1995], pp.96-115.



Christians, or by a corrupt and vicious system of education fit them for revolutionary agents' captured perfectly the antithetical relationship that was developing in the novels, making the worthy woman the diametrically opposed counterpart of the new philosopher.<sup>66</sup> Once it had been established that new philosophy targeted women as a vulnerable portal through which they could attack all of society, corroding the relations which bound it together, novelists were imperturbable in exposing the danger, defining new philosophy as a system which aimed first and foremost at deluding women out of their genuine duties and virtues. Hamilton's concise treatment of new philosophy in her *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* was an early but still determined attempt to lay bare what new philosophy really meant. She presented her new philosophers as looking forward to the Age of Reason as a time when filial affection would be a crime of the deepest dye, indeed would not even be possible since 'no man, in the age of reason, shall be able to guess who his father is; nor any woman to say to her husband, behold your son!' Chastity, the philosophers predicted, would be a weakness and female virtue would be 'estimated according as she has had sufficient energy to break its mean restraints.'<sup>67</sup> A more sustained treatment was forthcoming eight years later with Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), a novel which, however ambiguous the political stance of its author, could only have been interpreted by the majority of her contemporaries as an inquest into both the practicalities and morality of cohabitation and childbearing without marriage. The novel itself returned a decisive verdict on both counts, however tentative its author may have been about these conclusions. Such behaviour was iniquitous, Opie has Adeline reveal as part of her lengthy recantation, because 'I am convinced that if the ties of marriage were dissolved, or it were no longer to be judged infamous to act in contempt of them, unbridled licentiousness would soon be general practice'. And it was impracticable since 'What then, in such a state of society, would be the fate of the children born in it?'<sup>68</sup>

But the campaign to expose what another novelist, Alethea Lewis, referred to as 'the new philosophy of matrimony', which, she explained, 'as with everything else, is equality' - the campaign to unmask new philosophy as an attack on the duties of women as guardians of the family, and thus society, could not have had a clearer expression than in the opening words of *Dorothea; or, a Ray of the New Light*.<sup>69</sup> It is worth quoting at length:

When our reformers of the present day set out in the career of destruction, overturning all those barriers which experience and wisdom have been for ages erecting and

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<sup>66</sup> *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 3 (1799), 55.

<sup>67</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 218-19.

<sup>68</sup> Opie, *Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter: A Tale* [1804; London, 1805], III, 208. It is certainly true that Opie's main criticism of the new philosophical contempt for marriage is that it is impracticable in the prevailing state of society, but it is when put in the context of the attack on new philosophy that her opinions take on an observably more conventional anti-Jacobinism. Her death-bed renunciation of her former ideas is traditionally conservative, and definitely touched by rather Burkean considerations: 'Oh! teach my Editha [her daughter] to be humble; teach her to be slow to call the experience of ages contemptible prejudices; teach her no opinions that can destroy her sympathies with general society ... Be above all things careful that she wanders not in the night of scepticism' (III, 270).

<sup>69</sup> Lewis, *Plain Sense. A Novel* [1795; rpt. London, 1796], II, 228. Sir William Ackland, the speaker, goes on to say that he believes he and his wife 'were united upon the old terms [of marriage] of the wife's obedience and subordination'.

repairing; when through the breaches they make, a torrent of vice and folly rushes in to overwhelm and destroy all those soft and gentle ties which have hitherto surrounded the names of mother, wife, and daughter; when, not content with annihilating the power of reason in the stronger sex, they undertake to emancipate woman from the domination of religion, gentleness, and modesty: is it not time to shew the deluded victims of modern philosophy, that whilst they open the door to the *new light*, conjugal peace, filial affection, retiring grace, and every feminine virtue shrinking from the blaze, take that moment to depart, never more, alas! to return.<sup>70</sup>

And once new philosophy had been distilled into a debate which fell within the boundaries of gender propriety so important to so many women anti-Jacobins, a debate to which they might legitimately contribute (and the reading of which might also be authorised, since it concerned women readers so especially), novelists were able not just to caution their readers about the danger the radicals threatened, but also to offer their remedies. Thus the author of *Dorothea*, typically, was able to divide her prose between warnings:

My fair friends! believe not these declaimers; in themselves restless, disappointed, selfish, they seek to make *you* their victims!

and instructions about how new philosophy was to be defeated, which of course took the form of a recommendation of traditional female virtues:

No, let *us* be wives, glorying in the performance of our duty: let us be mothers, ready to sacrifice all for the dear helpless beings we produce...<sup>71</sup>

As it turned out, it was the former technique that would predominate, for in the view of the anti-Jacobin novelists, as well as being a plot to destroy the family by subverting women, new philosophy was also a cover for wicked individuals to perpetrate their predatory financial, sexual and also ideological campaign against innocent women.

Following Burke, as he did in so many ways, with his depiction of the Revolution as an assault on French family life, it was Edward Sayer who first attempted to mould the new philosophy he presented in his novel into the sort of sexual predation that constituted an attack on the family, predation that had for so long been the mainstay of the novel form, and which would continue to appear so often in anti-Jacobin fiction. In his *Lindor and Adelaïde* (1791), the Jacobin Antoine persecutes the innocent Adelaïde, an orphan, attacking the affectional structures she has built for herself (the sagacious Prieur and Madame Maricour are her surrogate parents, and she is on the point of wedding the virtuous Lindor) and disregarding his own marriage vows in the process. When, ultimately, he attempts to rape her, the justification he attempts is instructive in that, coming long before *Political Justice*, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, or Hays' *Emma Courtney*, it would remain in constant currency for the ensuing decade or so of anti-Jacobin novels:

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<sup>70</sup> Anon., *Dorothea*, I, 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., *Dorothea*, I, 150 and 146.

What is the difference ... between a woman who is one's wife and who is not? Can a priest muttering a few words, supersede the call of passion or give a higher zest to the affection of the heart? In the heart are the issues of love, and where that leads, what institution of the church, what act of man, shall impede its progress? The time is passed for such superstitious restraints, and we revel in the full freedom of love, free in that as in all other respects.<sup>72</sup>

Familiar though they would become, Sayer was not wholly at ease with these sentiments in 1791, and he added a substantial note voicing his fears that it would be regarded as a breach of 'the strict rules of critical propriety' for him to suppose that his character of Antoine, who had thus far only been depicted as a political miscreant, would also be a sexual degenerate. This seems rather quaint in the light of the artistic liberties anti-Jacobin novelists would later be taking in the interests of their campaign, but, in fact, Sayer's candour provides a very clear expression of why it was so useful for novelists to paint their new philosophers as sexual predators and ravagers of the family. The excuse Sayer himself actually gives for allowing this breach of critical propriety is rather doctrinal, for he claims that once all curbs on action, save the dictates of pure reason, are removed, then no-one will be able to curb their base passions. But this is unconvincing, and the fact that Sayer was prepared to break his own, and perhaps the critics', aesthetic rules suggests that he was willing to sacrifice them in return for the more severe reprehension he could arouse and bring down upon the Jacobins he was depicting. By making their new philosophers villains, the anti-Jacobins were smoothly and immediately incorporated into the traditions of the novel, no awkwardly artificial join rendering the new genre conspicuously propagandistic.<sup>73</sup>

Certainly, had anti-Jacobin fiction contained only political strictures, without the personal incrimination of Jacobinism for which Sayer was apologising, it would have been rather two-dimensional. It would also have failed to capitalise on its potential, for the real success of the anti-Jacobin novel was to incorporate the attack on new philosophy within the traditional structures of the novel. It might not have been quite the case that, as A. D. Harvey has contended, the numerous citations of new philosophic texts in novels, and especially the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, were 'an indication of how far the novel tradition in which female virtue had a central rôle saw itself threatened by Mary Wollstonecraft's teachings.'<sup>74</sup> Such an interpretation would rely on novelists having actually read, and interpreted in a way that historians have not reached a consensus on, the works of Wollstonecraft. But the novel was evidently perfectly suited to *presuming* that new philosophy, Wollstonecraft included, would be merely a mask for traditional modes of sexual predation, the stock-in-trade, as Harvey rightly says, of the eighteenth-century novel.

The merging of what we might call the *traditional*, that is, non-political villain, and the new philosopher of the anti-Jacobin novel, forming what I have labelled the 'vaurien', is so central a technique

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<sup>72</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde, a Moral Tale* [London, 1791], pp.285-88.

<sup>73</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, pp.285-88n.

<sup>74</sup> A. D. Harvey, 'George Walker and the Anti-Revolutionary Novel', p.292.

as to demand separate consideration, and I shall be presenting this in the next chapter. Here, though, it might be useful to skip forward to some of those novels at the tail-end of the anti-Jacobin novel's lifespan which demonstrate how this vaurien character, the new philosopher as a reiteration of the traditional rake, took on such a pivotal rôle as to render obsolete the new philosophy which had originally defined him. In Charlotte Dacre's *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* of 1805, for instance, the distinction between the two remains, but only just. Cazire, our heroine, is the prey of two men, the evidently new philosophical Fribourg, with his attempts to seduce her by drawing her into debates in which he talks openly of the 'prejudice' of marriage and the 'necessity' of following one's wishes, and the much more traditional Lindorf, who assails her with all the familiar eloquence of the rake, reciting poetry and throwing himself at her feet.<sup>75</sup> Only after Lindorf, reiterating the proposition already made by Fribourg, attempts to entice her away from home to live with him without the benefit of matrimony, does Cazire realise their resemblance:

The similarity of his arguments to those of Fribourg struck me instantaneously. I had often remarked their apparent resemblance, but the real difference between them consisted that Fribourg's were the offspring of reflexion, and Lindorf's of selfishness.<sup>76</sup>

Whether reflection or selfishness, the result was the same, and we see the new philosopher decoded as a libertine of the old school. But reading this recognition back into the anti-Jacobin novels of a few years previously, we see how important the distillation of new philosophy into an attack on affectional relationships was. Centrally, it laid bare a potentially credible, if not quite feasible, system into something manifestly iniquitous, and, most ingeniously, brought out the irony invested in the term *new* philosophy, undermining the 'new', just as much as the 'philosophy' had always been, by the demonstration that it was nothing more than a cover for the oldest of vices. Perhaps the best expression of this may be left to the author of *The Citizen's Daughter* (1804). Victim of Charles Denham's attempts to cajole her into an unmarried relationship, Marianne Willoughby dissects his new philosophy with a scalpel-sharp insight that, though seldom expressed so clearly, underlies every anti-Jacobin novel. Her separation of arguments and intent, and her conflation of philosophy and licentiousness, are seminal:

the *plausibility* of your *arguments* cannot disguise the *baseness* of the *intention*; and I thank heaven, I am not *weak* enough to be subdued by *either*. I rely upon my own *exertions* to be *happy*, without seeking resources from *depravity* or *guile*; imitate me in

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<sup>75</sup> Dacre introduces Fribourg without leaving any doubt over the category of villain into which he fits: 'His ideas on every subject were uncircumscribed by common opinions; he attacked unhesitatingly the received doctrines of ages, despised custom, and formed his actions from the result of his own inferences: his pleasures seemed in differing from others; established laws he considered prejudices; the principles he avowed were dangerous and seductive...'. When Cazire asks him to explain how it is that he is already married, he replies with one, Godwinian, word, 'Necessity!', before going on to mock the mere ceremony of marriage, to talk of the 'growth of perfection', and to insist on the absence of any laws, civil or natural, governing love. Lindorf's less philosophical strategy, on the other hand, has prompted an apparently contemporary reader to add in the margin of the copy in the British Library that 'one of the miseries of human life is to read the poetry of novels', to which another hand has replied, 'When you come to it skip it.' These readers' responses are surely testament to Lindorf's conventionality. 'Rosa Matilda' [Charlotte Dacre], *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer. A Tale* [London, 1805], I, 124-25, 126, 129, and II, 71.

<sup>76</sup> Dacre, *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer*, I, 89.



this, and act only under the influence of those *virtues* nature has implanted in your heart, unprejudiced by the *sophistry* of *modern* philosophy or unbridled licentiousness.<sup>77</sup>

### 3 *New philosophy refuted*

My analysis so far has emphasised that anti-Jacobin novelists, rather paradoxically, were above all keen to avoid debating what was perhaps the principal subject of their novels, the new philosophy. Reasoning was treacherous, to broadcast the doctrines of modern philosophy in a novel was irresponsible, and so strategies were developed, albeit intuitively, by which new philosophy could be countered without disclosing what it actually was, or even what the phrase was theoretically supposed to mean. Yet even if this strategy of constructing a putative new philosophy as they wished to see it, as nihilistic, selfish, conventionally wicked, and therefore vulnerable to attack, even if this strategy represented the most outstanding achievement of the anti-Jacobins, their fiction is also to be found engaging in more customary forms of satirical attack. Anti-Jacobin fiction was, after all, fundamentally a satirical genre, and perhaps in some of its better moments, deserves consideration alongside Peacock and Austen. Yet it is not my intention here to appraise from a literary point of view the satirical modes or forms employed by anti-Jacobins, whether sophisticated or blunt, innovative or archaic. It may, however, be of some historical pertinence to examine some of the techniques most frequently used in anti-Jacobin fiction, for, if nothing else, their frequent repetition argues for a very close generic identity for the anti-Jacobin novel.

As mentioned earlier, however, there were some few anti-Jacobin novelists who proved exceptions to the almost ubiquitous policy of shunning any semblance of political debate in their fiction. Edward Sayer, writing very early in the Revolution crisis, is one, filling his *Lindor and Adelaïde* (1791) with long and intricate, not to say otiose, defences of the British *status quo*. Writing later, and with only his manifest idiosyncrasy to explain it, Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges was another to adopt the 'Jacobin' technique of having a protagonist or two engage in open, reasoned and ostensibly unconstrained disputation on the political points the author wished his or her fiction to make. Yet even in Brydges' novels, his *Arthur Fitz-Albini* (1798) for instance, our hero's long disquisitions contending against those who seek to challenge the glory of the aristocracy or the importance of a rigid system of rank are very decidedly authorially contrived and controlled, rather than allowed to stand freely. When we examine his prose in more detail, we find that there is no genuine debate, only the author's reports of debate, Brydges telling us that Arthur 'lamented boldly' this, or 'despised the fallacious, half-witted arguments' which others used to assert that. The novel becomes a very Hansard as the author records the progress of dinner-table debates such as one 'in which, I know not by what felicity, Fitz-Albini, taking the lead, fell easily

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<sup>77</sup> Anon., *The Citizen's Daughter; or What Might Be* [London, 1804], p.110.

into a long train of opinions happily expressed, without appearing to declaim or be tedious.<sup>78</sup> If it was not a particularly sophisticated satirical technique for Brydges to display the semblance of debate whilst actually presenting just one side of it, not letting his readers hear the opposing side of the question, he was being really quite cunning in not even risking vouchsafing his own side of the question.

Much more common, of course, than even this kind of semi-debated pseudo-ratiocination, was the statement of the arguments of new philosophy in travestied form, reduced to the absurd. In parading the folly of new philosophy thus, authors were spared the need for such obvious authorial intervention as Sayer and Brydges had required to safeguard the reception of the doctrines they presented for ridicule. A few examples of this common technique will suffice, such as George Walker's presentation of Frederick Fenton, central character of his *Vagabond*, struggling to free a convicted murderer from his guards since, remembering his Godwin, he knows that any man ready to commit murder is scarcely less dangerous than one who has already done so. We can recognise this only as folly and condemn the system which encouraged it.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, when Halfaz, the new philosopher of *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, claims that he can overcome all the frailties of the body simply by acts of 'velleity', we know that this is ridiculous and are prepared for the authorial contrivance when it does come, the philosopher being unable to conquer the merest touch of sea-sickness.<sup>80</sup> Best of all perhaps is Elizabeth Hamilton's portrayal in her *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* of the new philosophers gathered at Sir Caprice Ardent's house trying out their theoretical schemes in practice. External circumstances form character, they (with Godwin) are convinced, and to prove that there is no reason why, 'by a proper course of education, a monkey may not be a Minister of State, or a goose a Chancellor of England', they attempt to turn three hundred sparrows into so many bees by placing them in a giant hive. In accordance with a bee's habits, the sparrows leave the hive in the morning, but against the prognostications of the philosophers, do not return at dusk to commence manufacture of honey. More success is expected with some fledglings, and they are shut in the hive with some honey for inspiration for three days. When the hive is opened, far from flying away to find pollen, the sparrows, to the amazement of the metaphysicians, are found dead and rotting. Hamilton, recounting

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<sup>78</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini, A Novel* [1798, rpt. London, 1799], I, 237 and 235-36. It is illuminating to note that Brydges' description of his hero's speech silently alters from a description of Fitz-Albini's discourse in the third person to the first person plural of its peroration: 'He treated with indignation, as strong as language could paint, the insolent and presumptuous folly which affected to throw by, as an useless incumbrance of prejudice and ignorance, the gradual and accumulated wisdom of every age, from the commencement of the world, and to build up a new system upon a set of new-discovered principles, totally original, and from the pure fountain of a philosophic mind. His contempt was too big for utterance, at the wretched, and base blindness of these people, when he observed, that they could so little have invented even the paltry systems of which they boast, without the aid of that wisdom and learning on which they would trample, that a child of ten years old, who has been accustomed to the society and conversation of well educated and well-informed minds, will often discover more rectitude, more vigour, more comprehension of knowledge, than the greatest abilities could arrive at, by the mere force of their own discoveries in rude and unpolished nations. The few particles that any one mind can add to the heap of wisdom are small indeed. We build step by step upon the works of our predecessors' (I, 238-39).

<sup>79</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 125-26.

<sup>80</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, I, 136-39 and II, 102.

this through the letters of Zaarmilla, has not found herself obliged to comment at all on the arguments of the new philosophers.<sup>81</sup>

Again, though, this was very contrived satire. Hamilton, like Walker and the author of *De Brinboc*, was evidently misrepresenting Godwin, exaggerating some of his tenets to grotesque proportions, and diminishing the potency of her lampoon as a result. More efficient satire could be extracted from some few sections of what might be regarded as genuine new philosophy, arguments actually taken direct from the works of the radical philosophers, which were deemed absurd enough already to stand alone, undistorted by travesty, and authors such as Hamilton were obviously delighted to be able to introduce such episodes at every opportunity. Godwin's famous meditative walk through the streets of London, wholly unconscious of what was passing around him, was one such self-parodying spectacle, and it is with a certain insouciance that we see it in Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers*, when a Mr Sardon tells Bridgetina that he, like her, can now walk from Charing-Cross to Hyde Park Corner without being distracted from his abstruse cogitations, and D'Israeli's *Vaurien*, in which the scene is first satirised in unadulterated form, and then given a supplementary interpretation as Vaurien walks through London deep in thought about the ease with which fires, riots and explosions could be occasioned.<sup>82</sup>

More common still were free-standing pastiches of 'the famous fire cause', as Charles Lamb called it, the notorious passage of *Political Justice* in which Godwin imagined his valet, his father, brother or benefactor, and Fénelon, theologian and all-round ornament to society, all trapped in a burning building, there being the possibility of rescuing only one of them.<sup>83</sup> Charles Lloyd chose simply to have his hero recount the episode, and Godwin's debate on who should be rescued, as a self-evident proof of the new philosophy's vile heartlessness, requiring little or no authorial commentary.<sup>84</sup> Walker took the grim satire further, dramatising the debate, but still not allowing it to develop into a parody which misrepresented Godwin's own arguments to any significant extent. In *The Vagabond*, he presented Frederick with the choice of saving either his father or his childhood sweetheart. As Godwin had hypothetically counselled, instead of immediately using his ladder to effect a rescue, Frederick meditated on which of the two had more value to society, both dying as a result of his delay.<sup>85</sup> By 1800 and Sarah Wood's *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron* the episode had apparently become so well known, and so denotative of the new philosophy's iniquity, as to figure without any authorial notification of its provenance whatsoever. She presents Julia, Julia's benefactress, and the young Maria trapped in a burning building, and sends a strange chevalier to their rescue. Though his instinct is to save Julia, our heroine, first, he hesitates, not because he is reasoning on utility, but because the women, heroines all, each suggest

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<sup>81</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 233-44.

<sup>82</sup> Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, III, 26 and D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, I, 65-66 and 214-19.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Lamb, *Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas [London, 1935], I, 237. See Godwin, *Political Justice*, pp. 169-71.

<sup>84</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, I, 128-30.

<sup>85</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 68-72.

the others as more worthy of rescue than herself. Eventually Wood has her knight very pointedly insist that 'this is no time for argument', and he promptly saves them all.<sup>86</sup>

Such self-evidently invidious tenets of the new philosophy were the only occasions on which authentic radical principles could be afforded an unchaperoned place in conservative fiction. Doctrines were untrustworthy, and indeed, most often we recognise new philosophers in fiction not through their opinions but because we are somehow told they are new philosophers. Their names are frequently a giveaway - Messrs. Newlight, Addlehead, Nincompoop, Mandred, Strongbrain, Swearwell, Subtlewould, Rhodomontade, Ironfang, Reverberator, Bounce, Rant, Libel, Dragon, Allcraft, Myope, Glib, Axiom, Sceptic, Vapour, Marauder, Imphell, Rattle, Mortlock, Stupeo and Alogos all feature as new philosophers in the anti-Jacobin novel, as do a Mrs Egotist and Mrs Dupecull, a Sir Phelim O'Flimzy and a Jean Le Noir, and, each in separate novels, a Mr and Mrs Bounce, a 'Squire Ardent and Sir Caprice Ardent, and two Mr Subtiles. The physiognomies with which authors endow them are also giveaways, working as both a hint as to what their opinions will be, and a physical manifestation of those ideas. Hamilton inserts a steady flow of information about Bridgetina Botherim's appearance in *Modern Philosophers*, for instance, so that by the end of the novel we know that she has a squint, a shrill voice, a twist in her shoulder, is short of stature, bald beneath her wig, and so on. Charles Lucas prefers to provide all the information at our first meeting with his Marmaduke Pendragon, whose blond hair is cut short and dyed black, who rubs his face with onions to stimulate whiskers (which appear a 'dingy yellow'), who is fat and puerile of countenance, the combined effect of which is 'that no stranger of sensibility could look in his face without a smile.'<sup>87</sup> In *Vaurien* it is the grotesque deformities of the mind that D'Israeli points out to us. Each of his new philosophers has their own quirk: Rant rants, Subtile deduces, Reverberator recapitulates, Libel calumniates, Bounce controversialises and Dragon bays for massacre.<sup>88</sup>

Such personal invective, of course, was a significant front on which the satirical campaign of the anti-Jacobin novelists was fought. Beyond such rudimentary lampoons, though, the fundamental

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<sup>86</sup> Sarah Sayward Barrell Keating Wood, *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron. A Novel* [Portsmouth, N.H., 1800], pp.253-54.

<sup>87</sup> Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, I, 2, 30, 99, 102; Lucas, *Castle of St. Donats*, II, 218. It seems that Lucas wishes it to appear that Pendragon has affected what his readers would recognise as the outfit of a Jacobin, for Surr's Mr Mental, for example, shares the same natural and adopted gaucheness: 'He was of large make, but thin; his face pale; his hair, a coal black, cropped short in the neck; his dress always the same, a suit of plain brown cloth' (*George Barnwell*, I, 30). Dwarfishness is just as much the sign of a new philosopher as the black, cropped hair. As well as Bridgetina, D'Israeli's Dr. Bounce is described as of stunted growth in *Vaurien* (I, 51) and Halfaz is introduced as 'the minute philosopher' in *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (I, 135). More standard descriptions of new philosophers and Jacobins may be found in *The Citizen's Daughter's* Mr Mandred, a 'black-looking old toad of a man' with 'a person extremely plain, not to say disgusting, possessed of a disposition no less deformed, though concealed beneath a villainous cloak of learning and philosophy' (pp.249 and 32), or in Craik's description of one of the protagonists of her *Adelaide de Narbonne*, of whom she records that 'Nature had not been kind with Marat in point of looks - he has a face expressive of his disposition, he is little and cadaverous' (III, 66). Craik acknowledged that she owed the characterisation to John Moore's *Journal*, and his portrait of Collot d'Herbois in *Mordaunt* is so similar as to suggest he had a fixed idea of the generic French Jacobin: 'His countenance was frightful. Children shut their eyes, and screamed at the sight of this man. His head sustained a frightful exuberance of bushy hair, black as tar, and stiff as the bristles of a hog; his complexion was cadaverous; his features haggard; his eyes sanguine: he looked very much like a villain and murderer; and he was a much greater villain and murderer than he looked like' (II, 71-72).

<sup>88</sup> D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, I, 51-52 and II, 257-58.



characteristic of any new philosopher was his or her hypocrisy, sometimes unwitting, sometimes deliberate. Worse, of course, was this second kind of hypocrite, those who acknowledged that they deliberately used doctrines they knew to be false simply to entangle their innocent prey in a web of casuistry. Such a one was Lady Appollonia Zulmer in Dacre's epistolary *The Passions* (1811), who candidly reveals to a correspondent that her corrupting letters to the naïve Julia have been filled with nothing but 'flimsy sophistry' designed to mislead. That this was an outstandingly straightforward method for an author to explain his or her attitude to new philosophy becomes obvious when Dacre makes Appollonia remorselessly divulge her machinations: 'How baseless, how false, the miserable doctrines and tenets I have broached to thee - false as hell itself!'<sup>89</sup>

I shall be dealing with these deliberate and calculating new philosophers at greater length in the next chapter, and, in any case, their Jacobinism sheds little light on new philosophy as such, for they were opportunistic villains more than even counterfeit philosophers. More pertinent here are those dupes of new philosophy whose unconscious hypocrisy sheds illumination on its nature. One such is Frederick Fenton, very much the disciple of Stupeo in Walker's *Vagabond*, but more dupe than fraud, ingenuously confessing to what he at first thinks 'trifling' faults in the systems he professes, but which, as he acknowledges them, he realises puncture his vision. He even admits that he has never understood the subjects on which he holds forth.<sup>90</sup> This type of dupe, if not sacrificed to new philosophy, is often to be found moving on to some other equally foolish craze following their dalliance with Jacobinism. Sir Caprice Ardent, living up to his name, ends *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* with his conversion to Methodism, and Mr Wilson, Jean Le Noir's associate in Britain in Pye's *Democrat* (1795), replaces his once ardent support for universal liberty on the French model with the equally ludicrous scheme for a plan to unite all the armies of Europe, according to their several qualities, in a grand alliance against France.<sup>91</sup>

The most popular device for exhibiting new philosophers' unconscious, but no less repugnant, hypocrisy, though, was to contrast their loud talk of levelling with their real love of privilege, submission and rank. In the quixote novels, it is a technique which features with almost monotonous regularity, the innate good sense and feeling of Sir George Warrington, for example, constantly discovering that, try as he might to share their principles, the behaviour of his new philosophical acquaintances runs contrary to all their professions of equality, fraternity and equality. Sarah Green, in her *Reformist!!!* of 1810, brings the technique to the zenith of its sophistication perhaps, when her Percival Ellingford, a zealous champion of equality, threatens to beat his honest servant for, ironically, pointing out to him that such a levelled

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<sup>89</sup> 'Rosa Matilda' [Charlotte Dacre], *The Passions* [London, 1811], II, 227.

<sup>90</sup> The 'trifling argument' against the new truth propagated by Pain [*sic*] - that all government that does not rule with the consent of its subjects is tyranny - is that it would be difficult for each government to send to 'every individual as he attained certain years, to know if he approved their establishment'. Later, when admitting that he does not understand what he has written, Frederick justifies himself by insisting that 'When a man writes a book of *methodical* information, he does not write because he understands the subject, but he understands the subject because he has written.' Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 24-5 and 187.

<sup>91</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 344; Pye, *The Democrat* [1795; London, 1796], II, 81-88.

society could never function.<sup>92</sup> It is Brydges, though, with his usual crassness (something of a mixed blessing for a propagandist), who makes the point impossible to miss, his hero responding on our behalf to the obvious contradiction between a visitor's profession that 'I'm for equality, damme!' and his vow of vengeance against a servant who has accidentally run over his dog:

Here it was impossible for Le Forester to be quite silent - 'You are for equality, I think, Mr Simpson!' he said a little sarcastically? 'Yes, damme, if I ben't,' replied he; 'I think myself as good as any Lord in the land - but then for these blasted servants to behave insolent, damme if it is not intolerable; I'll kick 'em to hell, I say!'<sup>93</sup>

The sort of hypocrisy that Le Forester had easily identified as underlying Simpson's new philosophy, essentially an envy of those above him, but a fixed contempt for those below, was a constant theme of anti-Jacobin propagandists. Just as recurrent a theme in fiction, though, and perhaps amounting to an even worse sin, was the tendency of the anti-Jacobins' new philosophers to preach one thing to their inferiors, and then to condemn their resulting actions. It is a pattern seen most clearly in Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tract, *The History of Mr Fantom, the New Fashioned-Philosopher, and his Man William* (1795?), possibly the source for numerous reiterations of the fable in similarly motivated novels over the next few years. More's Fantom is a new philosopher, not malicious so much as hardhearted, selfish and unthinking, and his constant talk of Godwinian theories over the dinner table seems harmless enough, even if it deprives society of the real benefits he could, and ought to, contribute. Harmless, that is, until his valet William Wilson, having listened to his master's philosophism, decides to put some of his theories into practice, relying on his new knowledge that crime is no more than an empty term and that there is no hereafter, to sanction the theft of his master's spoons and wine. His fate comes quickly, as he proceeds from theft to murder, is caught, brought to trial, abjured by Fantom, made mindful of his folly, and 'turned off', that is to say executed (though More's phrase is apparently a rare joke, punning on the term used for the dismissal of a servant). More later classed this tale as one of 'Stories for Persons of the Middle Rank', rather than one of her 'Tales for the Common People', a distinction that novelists seem to have recognised immediately, for in their many reiterations of the fable for a novel-reading audience, it is very definitely the Fantom character, rather than his servant, who takes centre-stage, and almost the entirety of the blame both as instigator of the crimes and heartless deserter of the eventual felon. Indeed, it is these criminals who turn, as it were, King's evidence for the jury of readers, and do most to indict their former masters and their philosophy.

Perhaps the earliest use of the Fantom trope in fiction we have already glanced at, with Timothy Trundle becoming the incredulous victim of his master's new philosophy, and then indifference, in Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah*. Hamilton's condemnation of Sceptic and Axiom here is much more severe than in the rest of her rather gently chiding novel: 'I did not think as how it would have been your honour,

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<sup>92</sup> Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington*, I, 204-205, II, 17-18, etc; Sarah Green, *The Reformist!!!*, II, 143-44.

<sup>93</sup> Brydges, *Le Forester. A Novel* [London 1802], II, 25.

that would have had the heart to turn against me at the last', says Trundle to Axiom from the dock of the court in which he is being tried. 'Many a time and oft have I heard you, and my master, Doctor Sceptic, say, that all mankind were equal, and that the poor had as good a right to property as the rich.' When, as Trundle is dragged off to the gallows, Axiom adds that the Age of Reason is approaching, when the 'fear of the gallows shall have as little influence as the fear of hell', Hamilton appears to have attempted to excite a real reprehension rather than the usual amused scorn.<sup>94</sup> Another almost exact facsimile of the same scene is to be found a year later in *The History of Sir George Warrington*, in which the butler actually did do it (burgle the house, that is), but only because he overheard the conversation of his master and Sir George regarding the virtues of equality and necessity. This did not stop Walker seeing fit to reproduce it once more in his *Vagabond* two years after that, another ex-servant losing his place as a result of his new ideas and turning to theft as a consequence.<sup>95</sup> Similar episodes appear in other novels too, servants always being corrupted by the carelessly disseminated new philosophy of their betters.<sup>96</sup>

Simply from the number of times it recurs, it seems safe to infer that this 'Fantom' motif was deemed particularly effective. Showing new philosophers as forsaking the victims of their own trifling with radicalism emphasised at once their folly and their disgraceful callousness. It emphasised the difference, the vital difference, between theory and practice, and by exposing this hypocrisy it proved itself a trope perfectly adapted for the novel. Authors aimed their novels (whether accurately or not) towards what More had called the 'middle rank', a class who might be supposed to include neither rogues who took up new philosophy because it suited their nefarious purposes, nor the credulous valets, butlers or maidservants whom the novelists showed to be so bewitched by the superficial doctrines of Godwinianism that they sincerely invoked them to justify their crimes. By targeting new philosophers who were imprudent, not vicious, irresponsible, not wicked, novelists were appealing to the section of society they thought most likely to benefit from their literary didacticism, designing their fiction for a particular

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<sup>94</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 203-204.

<sup>95</sup> The butler in *The History of Sir George Warrington* leaves a note explaining his 'crime' - he has been convinced, he writes, 'that every man has an equal right to the goods this world can afford. ... I had a necessity', he goes on, 'and you cannot, therefore, in conscience, be angry with me for taking the first opportunity of equalizing property (as you call it) as far as lay in my power: though I certainly begin before the scheme is general' (II, 17-18). The corresponding passage in Walker's *Vagabond* differs only in that it is more specific in its attribution of new philosophical tenets, the robber telling the magistrate that he imbibed his opinions from Dr Alogos having read 'a great book of political justice' from the pulpit, which denied that so-called crimes should be punished since 'it were not likely, please you worship, that any man should commit the same again, and no man ever committed the same offence in all its circumstances, as the law do mention.' Furthermore, the offender was starving from having lost his place because he refused to attend church or work hard, because Alogos had advised him that neither were necessary, and so having been told that 'the poor ought to have the land of the rich divided; ... though my heart did misgive me, I were persuaded to begin with the Doctor, as it were but proper he should practise what he did preach' (II, 61-62).

<sup>96</sup> See for example *Dorothea*, in which the girls at the school established by the eponymous new philosopher pick up her 'flossophy' and, having learned that no-one need work more than half an hour each day and that all have a right to help themselves to what anyone else has excess of, burgle and assault Dorothea herself (III, 51-56 and 84-93); and also Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, in which Adeline's anxiety that she has 'led by her example and precepts and innocent girl' - her old servant, Mary Warner - 'into a life of infamy', looking 'upon that unhappy girl's guilt as a consequence of her own', echoes the regret felt by Glenmurray that the new philosophy he taught Adeline has driven her to sins she would not have been guilty of alone (p.225).

purpose. Who could want to emulate these new philosophers - half fool, half knave - their novels demanded.

But if attacking new philosophers as a means of attacking new philosophy was one strong technique of the anti-Jacobins, and a strategy that obviated the need to address any specific tenets of that philosophy to boot, then a second method also inherent in the Fantom trope was to show the consequences of new philosophy once adopted in practice. The specific doctrines of new philosophy which the Fantom theme drew upon were particularly pertinent to novel-readers. Theft of property was the practical result, the novels repeated, of what might just conceivably, in theory, seem enlarged and liberal notions, and what consumer of novels could want that? Not even the asinine new philosophers who had been conjured up in the novels themselves could bring themselves to accept these consequences, as their willingness to prosecute the victims of their own precepts proved. Anti-Jacobin novelists showed quite straightforwardly that anyone with property, any one in the 'middle ranks', anyone who could afford to buy or borrow a novel, had a great deal to lose from new philosophy.

But it was not only the economic consequences of adopting new philosophy that the anti-Jacobin novelists elected to depict. A novel, with its eminently controllable narrative, was of all forms of propaganda the one most suited to showing effects springing out of causes, and this was a kind of lesson that had the other advantage of requiring the minimum of explicit didacticism. Who could miss, for instance, the lesson to be found in Halfaz's fate in *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, in which, having disappeared for a volume or two, he resurfaces as a dipsomaniac orator in an ale-house, the target for the mob's ridicule and missiles, toppling over with the wildness of his gesticulation, apparently imagining he is storming the Bastille, and demanding that the inn-keeper, who has denied him more drink, be hanged at a lamp-post? The surgeon soon has no alternative but to diagnose him as insane, and, despite their friendly efforts to prevent it, our heroes 'saw the unfortunate philosopher carried off to a mad-house; there, in all probability, to terminate the remainder of his singular and memorable life.'<sup>97</sup> Similarly self-evidently, in Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah*, we are introduced to a young man whom Dr Sceptic is proud of having alienated from his clergyman father and of educating as an atheist, only for him to drop out of the novel until suddenly reappearing having ruined his beloved by insisting that marriage was an empty convention, having driven her to kill herself, and having himself been forced to suicide.<sup>98</sup> In her *Modern Philosophers* Hamilton was a little more insistent that her readers should not miss the consequences of the new philosophy practised by Vallaton, Myope and the rest. As well as the plot itself proving the disastrous results of their empty systems - the humiliation of Bridgetina and the death of Julia and her family being the most eloquent of comments - Hamilton periodically interspersed running tallies of the ruin so far wreaked by new philosophy. Mr Glib's children are in the workhouse, Mrs Botherim laments

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<sup>97</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, III, 238-43. The only people who continue to believe in Halfaz's sanity are the members of 'the corresponding society' who place great store by his proofs that everything is common property, especially the landlord's beer.

<sup>98</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 215-16 and 273.



on one such occasion, Mrs Glib has gone off with a recruiting officer, Captain Delmond has died through grief at his daughter's behaviour, and, the redoubtable Mrs Botherim concludes, even she will never be quite the same.<sup>99</sup>

Essentially, the comment that Charles Lloyd gives to his sagacious character Charles Maurice in *Edmund Oliver* might well have been placed at the end of almost every chapter of almost every anti-Jacobin novel: 'You evidently see in this case,' he says, 'the horrible effect of playing with human passions, and throwing down wantonly the barriers religion and morality have erected - and of adopting a method of cold and generalising calculation in conduct, which stands aloof from nature and human sympathies.'<sup>100</sup> Each chapter, each episode, attempted to provide a crucible in which the principles of new philosophy could be put into practice and, of course, found not merely wanting, but productive of the most conspicuous evils. This was the primary purpose, and the predominant method, of anti-Jacobin fiction, achievable with the minimum of authorial mediation. It was a technique that was merely made most obvious, was merely taken to its furthest extent, in the dystopias fabricated by a number of novelists to display the world promised, or rather threatened, by new philosophy.

D'Israeli seems to have realised the efficacy of such a technique, for he added one such dystopian chapter to the second edition of his *Flim-Flams!*, depicting a town run on Godwinian lines, in which no-one ever believed the word of another, for CACO-NOUS, that is to say Godwin, had spoken against promises, no-one ever performed favours for another, since gratitude was a thing of the past, in which each man had to act as constable himself, for no-one respected private property, and each woman refused to keep house, 'in consequence of what CACO-NOUS had written against cohabitation'.<sup>101</sup> In effect, though, both *Flim-Flams!* and *Vaurien* had been constructed in their entirety as literary laboratories for the refutation of the new philosophical hypothesis. Likewise, *Massouf*, with most of its narrative couched as the elaborate dream of its hero, as well as the novel being in the allegorical form of an Oriental tale, was wholly an attempt to disprove the new philosophy with which the ardent, young prince had been tempted. But it also included a miniature dystopia, inset into the narrative, Massouf visiting a colony of 'the enlightened' where he sees not enlightenment, but savagery, children playing with the severed limbs of their grandparents, incest and bigamy commonplace, and the strong and the talented executed for encroaching on equality.<sup>102</sup> The dystopia, the dream, the Oriental setting are all distancing layers for the didacticism, but once they have been peeled away, the analogy with Britain in danger in 1802 is evident.

Similarly multi-layered, and most impressive of all these dystopias, is the tour that Walker conducts his protagonists on in his *Vagabond*. Their quest for a pantisocratic utopia in Kentucky is

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<sup>99</sup> Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, III, 168-70. Compare the swift and sure fate of the dependents of the Wollstonecraftian Jemima in Walker's *Vagabond*: 'The children who had none to provide for them, were sent to the work-house, to be educated by the public, where they caught the small-pox, and died' (I, 183).

<sup>100</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, II, 86-87.

<sup>101</sup> D'Israeli, *Flim-Flams!* [2nd edn., London, 1806], I, 82-83.

<sup>102</sup> Anon., *Massouf*, pp.167-79.

detailed as it fails utterly, the new philosophy they bring with them wholly unsuited - as ever - to the realities of their situation. Walker systematically demonstrates it to be incapable of dealing with everything from the storms of the Atlantic voyage to the need to defend the new philosophers from the depredations of the Native Americans, from the tricks of Philadelphia lawyers to the barrenness of the land and their realisation that slaves are apparently necessary to make it productive. Then the civilization of the Amerindians, which Stupeo, in accordance with so much Jacobin thought, supposes will be natural and noble, is exposed as just as corrupt as the new philosophers themselves.<sup>103</sup> Only then do they discover their promised land, a beautiful country that seems to be brimming with all good things and crowded with spires and domes, a nation, in other words, which resembles the Britain that the vagabonds have left. But it is a country that has undergone a revolution, a 'Perfect Republic', as Walker's chapter title calls it, founded on 'the Principles of Equality and Political Justice', a country in which all manner of new philosophical doctrines are played out and which, as we quickly discover, will shortly have achieved its own ruin. Walker makes no secret of what his novel is really addressing. 'It is astonishing', he informs us in a note, 'how ridiculous and even irrational the new doctrines appear, when taken from the page of metaphysics, and contrasted with practice', and we are shown how under the new regime no work can ever be completed, due to Godwin's conviction that each man need work only half an hour a day; how the government, such as it is, is filled with rabble-rousers and drunkards since each citizen had been given the vote; and how women had determined that they should be equal with the men - until, that is, the men began to use force to make the women undertake all the labour necessary for providing food, raiment and shelter, when they soon found it advisable to entreat 'to be reinstated in the ancient slavery'.<sup>104</sup>

Walker often interrupts his fictional dystopia with notes drawing attention to the parallels with the genuine one to be found in Revolutionary France, or at least to be found in the anti-Jacobin historians whom he quotes in support of the analogy.<sup>105</sup> This nicely links the sort of 'theoretical' anti-Jacobin fiction Walker was writing with the type of conservative novel which concentrated on representing the real Revolution, as detailed in the preceding chapter, but it also, as we also saw with *Massouf*, emphasises his central purpose - to use his fiction to exhibit the fate of Great Britain should she be allowed to become victim to the new philosophy. Showing all his new philosophers one by one recant their idiocy, he even dramatises the conversion he hopes to effect in his readers, or which, at least, his anti-Jacobin propaganda had as its theoretical *raison d'être*. 'I will return,' cries Dr. Alogos, once the most convinced pantisocrat but now determined to get home to Britain, 'I will return ... that I may at least set my example to them, and

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<sup>103</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 111-179. The new philosophers hypocritically purchase a slave, whilst the Amerindians steal from them, and beat their own wives and daughters, disproving, in Walker's opinion, Stupeo's assertion that 'revenge is all they seek, for the unjust usurpation of the Europeans: - are we not driving them from their ancient possessions, and daily narrowing their bounds and power to live' (II, 160)?

<sup>104</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 180, 187n., 190, 194-95 and 197-98.

<sup>105</sup> For instance: 'The reader is referred to Dr. Meyer's *Fragmens sur Paris*, translated into French by Dumourier, where he will find a true but wretched description of a country labouring under the practice of a new philosophy', or 'for the instruction of the reader' a passage from Mr Peltier's *Tableaux of Paris* is inserted, etc. Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 201-202n. and 196n.

would to God they could see the precipice to which they are blindly straying'. Just as significant, though, was his afterthought that he would also endeavour to 'open their eyes to the private views and interests of those miscreants who are shaking the torch of sedition in their face, while they seek only an opportunity of picking their pockets', for in drawing this distinction between himself, whom he evidently thought of as a victim, and others, whom he arraigned as villains, he was hitting upon what was a subtle, but nevertheless important, distinction between new *philosophy* and new *philosophers*.<sup>106</sup> New philosophy was a flimsy chimera, perhaps in itself even harmless, and Alogos, though certainly a new philosopher, was a dupe more than anything else, a fool foolish enough actually to believe in it. The new philosophers from whom he and his kind imbibed their folly were no dupes though, but knaves whose conviction of, or even connection with, any form of ideological radicalism was slender to say the least. They were the 'vauriens', men and women who adopted new philosophy as a means to an end, and they form the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>106</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 241.

## 5: The Vaurien and the Hierarchy of Jacobinism

I must, however, acknowledge that we have some restless Spirits amongst us, who by their seditious Writings have contributed not a little to the Work of Destruction.... I thank Heaven the number of such Miscreants is but small, when compared to the Spirit of the whole Nation!

- Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron* (1795?)

In the partly mimetic, partly dystopian, world envisaged by the anti-Jacobin novelists, new philosophy was without doubt the language in which Jacobinism was conveyed and understood, the currency in which it circulated. The new philosophers, however, despite the profusion of them we encountered in the last chapter, were not so much Jacobinism's perpetrators, as just the first in the long line of its victims. As the recantation of Dr Alogos hinted at towards the close of George Walker's *Vagabond*, there were two kinds of miscreants populating the anti-Jacobin novel - those who, like Alogos and still more like the young and ardent Frederick Fenton, had been somehow convinced of the virtues of new philosophy, had really believed in all that it seemed to offer for the good of mankind; and those who had been responsible for instilling this conviction, this delusion, who had made dupes of these new philosophers, men like Walker's Stupeo, who used new philosophy without ever being quite so naïve as to believe a word of it himself.

Such men, and in some cases women, I shall rather arbitrarily be referring to as 'vauriens', a term coined, or rather imported from the French (from which it translates as a good-for-nothing), by Isaac D'Israeli for the protagonist of his novel of 1797, *Vaurien: or, Sketches of the Times*. As we shall see, D'Israeli by no means invented the concept of the vaurien, and nor, although (as we have already seen) he presented numerous new philosophical dolts to stand alongside his conniving anti-hero, was he the first to distinguish between the Jacobin who was a fool and the Jacobin who was a knave. Indeed, the distinction was central to anti-Jacobin ideology, and certainly to its fiction, for if every admirer of the French Revolution and its principles was to be thought a designing villain, a vaurien, then this would force the indictment of a vast section of the British population, certainly in the first years of the Revolutionary decade, on the same charges as might be levelled against a Thomas Paine or Mary Wollstonecraft. The retractions of support for the French and their Revolutionary aims that were so characteristic of the British response to the Revolution by 1792-94, the years of the Terror and the beginnings of war with France, themselves suggested that British Jacobins had been dupes rather than the sort of villain who alone could



be committed to a cause which had become so manifestly iniquitous, with its savagery, bellicosity, atheism and regicide.

This simple discrimination between vaurien and new philosopher, however, is not sufficient to comprehend the Jacobinism envisaged by the anti-Jacobin novelists, and indeed individual novelists seldom overtly make such a clear-cut distinction. Any two individual characters of these types were merely two points on a finely graduated scale of villainy, a 'hierarchy of Jacobinism' it might reasonably be called, since hierarchies of various kinds were such an essential component of conservative thought in the late eighteenth century. Before moving on to a discussion of the vaurien, then, this hierarchy of Jacobinism, and the ways in which it was imagined to operate, demands examination, for, even if for no other reason, this hierarchy was the means by which, to borrow Edmund Burke's famous analogy, the few noisy and irritating Jacobin grasshoppers in the field could possibly incite to rebellion the docile cattle whose only innate desire was to continue to repose beneath the shadow of the British oak.<sup>1</sup>

### *1 The spread of the Jacobin contagion*

In the previous chapter we examined one of Hannah More's 'Stories for Persons of the Middle Rank', her *History of Mr Fantom, the New-Fashioned Philosopher, and his Man William*, and some of its many reiterations in novels over the following few years. The basic import of this fable of a fool's new philosophy overheard, and acted upon, by a servant, who would speedily pay the penalty with his trial and execution, was clearly that new philosophy, and the Jacobinism it represented, was a contagious disease which, though its symptoms might seem minor in the first instance when educated and affluent men like Fantom were contaminated, was much more virulent among certain more susceptible sections of society in which the infection could all too easily prove fatal.

In More's terms, new philosophy trickled down the social order, servants being most vulnerable to its assaults on their civil and religious virtues, or rather it was they who were most likely actually to act upon these new principles, and thereby incur the just retribution of both the temporal and, we are generally told to assume, spiritual authorities. Certainly, this was also the case in a great many of the 'Fantom' episodes which followed, in all of which, of course, the law worked perfectly, quickly apprehending the lawbreakers so that they might accuse their new philosophical masters and mistresses of encouraging the crime for the benefit of the novel-readers for whom they stood. Timothy Trundle in Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah* (1796) had been servant to Dr Sceptic before robbing him, David Turner had been butler to Mr Goldney before stealing from him in *The History of Sir George Warrington* (1797), the

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. VIII, ed. L G Mitchell [Oxford, 1989], p. 136.

thieves of all Dr Alogos' property in Walker's *Vagabond* (1799) had been servants they later reveal, the heroine of *Dorothea* (1801) had brought upon herself the burglary and beating perpetrated by her once obedient and chaste servant and the girl's illicit lover, whilst Adeline Mowbray, in the midst of her own despair, had 'feelings of a most overwhelming nature' when she recollected that she had been the cause of plunging a servant into new philosophy-inspired vice.<sup>2</sup> For that matter, it is generally servants who were induced by their wicked, Jacobin masters to carry out attacks on our heroes and heroines in the more gothic of the anti-Jacobin novels, the servant of De Verney, for instance, acting as accomplice to his master and Marat in their plan to assassinate the noble St. Cyprian in Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne*, or Jacquetta and Basili assisting the infamous schemes of their pro-Revolutionary master, Revillon, in Robinson's *Hubert de Sevrac*.<sup>3</sup>

These servants were ensnared by new philosophy, we are often made aware, because they were poor and had nothing to lose by adopting the new system, because they were ignorant, their critical faculties not sufficiently sophisticated to expose the sophistry of new philosophy, and because they were fanciful enough to imagine that the chimerical ideals that new philosophy offered could ever actually exist. Servants were not alone at the bottom of this hierarchy of opinions, for at least two of the same characteristics that had rendered them prone to the new philosophical poison - their willingness to believe new philosophy's empty promises and their inability to contest and rebut its fallacies - were shared, the novels demonstrate, by another group apparently particularly susceptible to its allurements - women. Adeline Mowbray, of course, is a prime example of a woman too ardent, or perhaps too credulous, for her own good, a woman who takes up the new philosophy of Glenmurray to a much greater extent than he knew to be either practical or fitting, paying the penalty when her disavowal of society's 'prejudices' leads to her ruination and contrite death. The same impassioned and doomed endorsement of new philosophy is exhibited by Dorothea in the novel that bears her name, although she is allowed to survive both her folly and her repentance of it, and to live happily the traditional life her mother and husband had long recommended. Elsewhere, though, there were some much less sympathetic treatments of women made victims to new philosophy, more misogynistically suggesting that an innate female licentiousness was the reason for their vulnerability to Jacobin doctrines. But also just as frequent, and more significant here, it was the inability of women to refute new philosophy that made them vulnerable to its fascinations. In Elizabeth Helme's *Farmer of Inglewood Forest* (1796), for instance, the penitent Emma leaves a manuscript to be read after her death explaining how it was that she was drawn into her immorality,

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<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* [1796; London, 1801], II, 191-205; Anon., *The History of Sir George Warrington; or the Political Quixote* [London, 1797], I, 16-18; George Walker, *The Vagabond, A Novel* [London, 1799], II, 47-62; Anon., *Dorothea; or, A Ray of the New Light* [London, 1801], III, 51-56 and 84-93; Amelia Opie, *Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter* [1804; London, 1986], p.225.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet. A Tale* [London, 1800], III, 96; Mary Robinson, *Hubert de Sevrac, A Romance of the Eighteenth Century* [1796; Dublin, 1797], I, 10-39.

atheism and licentiousness. By degrees, she says, she imbibed the tenets of her new philosophical seducer, Whitmore, 'and became a professed free-thinker,'

for he used to engage me in controversies that I was not able to defend; and to bear down my reason with his volubility, and erroneous maxims dressed in flowery language, until I was forced to yield the point, though at the same time my heart bore testimony of their fallacy.<sup>4</sup>

The aristocratic young women of Vienna who people Sophia King's *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy* (1798) were even less capable of coping with the dissipated principles that Waldorf so sedulously strove to disseminate. Herdi Lok, Waldorf's mentor, knew full well these dangers of exporting new philosophy to those unfitted to receive it. Of one of Waldorf's victims he comments,

How could you expect to make Sophia a philosopher, or a determined atheist of a confirmed bigot? A weak mind must not be tampered with, nor dangerous doubts infused onto a flimsy understanding: you might as well put a loaded pistol into the hands of a baby; for destruction is sure to follow... .

Being female, being creatures of sensibility, being Catholic 'bigots', and having the propensity to fall in love with a handsome and mysterious new philosopher, King shows a substantial section of society to be vulnerable, and Waldorf cuts a swathe through them, leading whole families to their death as daughter after daughter dies 'a victim of the tenets of Waldorf', tormented by 'the reproaches of her conscience', and son after son perishes in pursuit of revenge.<sup>5</sup>

The real crime of the new philosopher, we find, was not the possession of new philosophical doctrines itself, but the spread of such dangerous opinions to sections of society unfitted for their reception. Thus it is that Mr Cameron, a magistrate in *The History of Sir George Warrington*, reprimands the eponymous political quixote at the trial of his friend's butler for robbery, not for his new philosophy *per se*, but for 'speaking in terms which an ignorant mind or a base heart may easily wrest to their own purposes.'<sup>6</sup> And throughout anti-Jacobin fiction, we find this specific censure of transmission rather than belief reiterated, just as with Price and Paine - and one thinks of the trial of Paine for Seditious Libel, when the Attorney General had asked the Jury to 'be pleased to take into [their] consideration the phrase and manner as well as the matter' - who also had been deemed most culpable for propagating, not simply holding, their opinions.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Helme, *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest, a Novel* [London, 1796], IV, 34-35.

<sup>5</sup> King, *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy* [London, 1798], I, 118 and 131-32.

<sup>6</sup> Anon., *The History of Sir George Warrington*, II, 37.

<sup>7</sup> *The Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason...*, compiled by T. B. Howell and Thomas James Howell [London, 1817], 22, 383. See for example Charlotte Smith's *The Banished Man. A Novel* [London, 1794], in which the almoner Heurthofen is first identifiable, and most seriously indictable, as a Jacobin because, perverting his duty as the instructor of the family's dependents, he had told a servant 'that, in his opinion, these great families are no better than we ourselves' (I, 130-31). The same is made plain by Thomas Skinner Surr in his *George Barnwell. A Novel* [London, 1798], in which the new philosopher Mental, with his taste for attacking 'the most allowed truths', for discoursing on 'the irredeemable evils of society', is shown

For the learned themselves, new philosophy was most often a well intended, but mistaken, attempt to ameliorate the condition of mankind, a 'species of moral chemistry,' as Jane West put it, 'which rarefies, distils, evaporates, and compounds virtues, till they change their natures and become vices'.<sup>8</sup> And for those equipped to control the potent forces unleashed by such experimentation with the civil and moral laws of society, it was foolish perhaps, but just about permissible to delve into new philosophies. Even Burke had admitted as much, lamenting only that those who had been given the opportunity to explore the nature of society and comment on its few regrettable faults, now proved refractory, now forgot all propriety, now thought themselves free to use their learning for whatever purpose they chose, however dangerous to that good order that had allowed them their privilege. 'Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition,' he said, 'had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master!', since having now spread their new doctrines to those completely unfitted for its reception, he famously opined, 'Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast down into the mire and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.'<sup>9</sup> Thus the quiet philosophical researches of, say, Mental in *George Barnwell*, we recognise as innocuous if kept to himself, but highly reprehensible as soon as he begins to communicate them to the ingenuous George. Then, like Priestley, whose lifestyle Mental parallels, he deserves the mob that gathers at his house intent on destroying his scientific apparatus, the symbol of his iconoclastic theorising.<sup>10</sup>

And of course it is the mob, the swinish multitude, the sans-culottes who could actually make revolution a reality, that underlie this hierarchical conception of Jacobinism's dissemination, that are signified by the ignorant and indigent dupes of new philosophy's sophistry. When Fantom, or one of his many reiterations, carelessly ignites the flame of new philosophy in a servant, or other figure ill-fitted for the reception of such doctrines, he, the Fantom figure, stands symbolically for the rabble-rouser of old repute, but endowed with new terror by the recent events in France. It is imperative, therefore, that every good citizen keep those below him or her in the hierarchy in ignorance of their distress and the possibility of alleviating it, a concern spelled out in *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day* (1802). There we are shown the would-be reforming prince learning from the counsels of the sagacious Superior of a convent that 'Where nothing is discussed, every thing is patiently endured;' and that, 'When men are ignorant, the unavoidable evils of poverty are endured, not from a conviction that a state of poverty must exist in every society - a poor source of consolation to the suffering individual!' - although one frequently put forward in works of both political philosophy and fiction - 'but from long habits of enduring, which grow with the

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launching an impressionable young man, our hero, George, into the web of Jacobinically-justified dissipation and vice spun by the more malicious and genuinely iniquitous Miss Milwood. Ultimately, both Mental and Milwood are equally condemnable (I, 31).

<sup>8</sup> West, *The Infidel Father* [London, 1802], II, 307.

<sup>9</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 130.

<sup>10</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, I, 145.



growth of men, and strengthen with his strength'. But, the Superior goes on, coming to the crux of the matter, and addressing the particular iniquity of a Mr Fantom,

where, from the spirit of discussion artfully promoted, the poor are industriously excited to draw a comparison between their own wants and the superfluidities of their fellow subjects - where an existing evil is sedulously pointed out to them, to which it is not in the power of men to provide a remedy, the happiness of each individual must sink in the general wreck of society, and those who cannot escape from famine and from slaughter, must become its helpless victims.

And lest either Massouf or the reader should somehow miss this stark warning, just such an event is dramatised at the close of the novel, the population, having been inspired in their rebellion by the new philosopher Zemedin, rising up and filling the city with conflagrations and shrieks of terror and, fittingly, setting fire to the tower in which Zemedin continues to pursue his incendiary, and all too flammable, speculations.<sup>11</sup>

It is the inability of the mob to realise that new philosophy was never meant to be put into practice that makes them so dangerous, but it is a characteristic shared by those new philosophers who impart it to them too. Only those at the top of this hierarchy down which new philosophy percolates realise its fraudulent and chimerical nature, their victims investing progressively greater and greater faith in principles which had never been meant to be believed. Herdi Lok, for instance, the originator of the licentious philosophy that corrodes morals, religion and loyalty in Sophia King's *Waldorf*, believes that the doctrines he preaches will be perfectly possible to institute only as Mephistopheles might appear to believe that Faust will have no regrets about his bargain. Waldorf, on the other hand, Lok's first gull and the character in whom the reader's sympathy is invested, is easily beguiled by the promises of new philosophy, but still consistently exhibits a conscience that is anathema to Lok's system, and soon - although too late - begins to doubt its practicality and probity. An orphan with no means of subsistence in a strange city, Waldorf was ripe for cozening, and, for precisely the same reasons, unfit for the seductive doctrines of Lok. But if he was unsuited for new philosophy, a symptom of which was its irresistibility to him, his mistress, Helena, to whom he passes on his principles, was even less able to see that its consequences could only be destructive, and even less able to cope with the freedom it permitted and encouraged. Ruin was sure to follow, and her innate depravity quickly came to the surface, as she made 'her principles subservient to her pleasures' until her inevitable suicide ended a pan-European career of promiscuity, and worse, proselytisation of others still.<sup>12</sup>

Frederick Fenton, hero of George Walker's *The Vagabond* provides another good example. Sent from home to continue his education, he imbibes his Jacobin principles from Stupeo, a wily new philosopher who obliterates any residual feelings of filial duty in Frederick by promising him the

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<sup>11</sup> Anon., *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day. An Eastern Tale* [London, 1802], pp.146-47 and 201-205.

<sup>12</sup> King, *Waldorf*, II, 199-200.

company of any number of sexually available women. But worse, an ingenue like him actually believes, and therefore evangelises the tenets of their own seducers. Only Frederick could be foolish enough, on his peregrinations around British Jacobin circles, to accuse other new philosophers of insincerity and betrayal of their great cause. 'Hypocrites!' he reprimands two founder members of a London debating society as they plot to fabricate evidence of new governmental atrocities, 'will you sully the beauty of truth by such actions?' And as they escape, fearing him to be a government agent, so uncommon is it for them to consort with genuine radicals, they leave Frederick to put the case for reform to those who remain to listen, something which he does with more conviction, but less success.<sup>13</sup>

We cannot help but feel a certain sympathy for Frederick, just as we do for the political quixote, Sir George Warrington, who, when he meets other disciples of new philosophy never finds that they live up to his naïve expectations. Benjamin Potter, for instance, disappoints the early opinion Sir George has formed of him by admitting that 'This liberty and equality is glorious work for me', explaining that until a few days ago he was merely a footman, but now he has become a gentleman and eloped with his master's daughter and her £10,000. 'And it is villains like these,' Sir George is forced to concede, having been given an insight into the true motives of this new philosophical footman, 'who disgrace a cause that is so noble in itself!' To which the author cannot resist adding, perfectly expressing his or her intentions in filling the novel with several examples of this sort of episode, 'Alas! he was yet to learn, that, among many who adopted his favourite system, there were but few who, like himself, thought only of the general good that might spring from it'.<sup>14</sup>

This Benjamin Potter, another servant, is victim of another Fantom-figure. 'My master was always preaching about the rights of man, and such like', he explains, 'so I have taken the liberty to run away with his eldest daughter, and consider myself quite on a footing with him.' Yet unlike Fantom's man, William, Potter's deliberate felonies, as well as the conventionality of the offenses, sets him up as more than merely an innocent victim of another's careless talk. He is, to a certain extent, a villain in his own right, for, as the author very deliberately points out, he was like by far the greater part of new philosophy's adherents who 'entertained no hopes, but of raising themselves by the destruction of others'.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, for all that his own position is more complicated than many other servants corrupted by their masters, Potter's crimes are still less condemnable than those of his master, 'Squire Thornton, and his quixotic friend, Sir George, who provided the opportunity, and the justification, for his villainy. Yet they too had been dupes of new philosophy in their turn every bit as much as Potter. Like him, they combine the rôles of victim and victimiser, being merely links in the chain of new philosophy, something made very clear in *The History of Sir George Warrington*, with its sympathetic treatment of the quixote figure.

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<sup>13</sup> Walker, *The Vagabond*, I, 88-95.

<sup>14</sup> Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington*, I, 104 and 115.

<sup>15</sup> Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington*, I, 104 and 115.

Elsewhere too, even the most abandoned new philosophers often command pity more than censure, since they too are dupes of others, higher up this sinister chain. Mr Glib, for instance, in Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers* (1800), though partly responsible for the ruination of Bridgetina, we find to be a sacrifice to other new philosophers, made victim by his folly not his wickedness. It is Maria Sydney who identifies that he 'seems to make use of some author, who probably little imagined that his theory would ever meet with such a practical advocate', and since the notes cite Godwin as the culprit, we have no difficulty recognising the figure above Glib in the Jacobin hierarchy.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, though, in other anti-Jacobin novels, the question is often more vexed. In the case of Whitmore in *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest*, for instance, he and his equally licentious sister appear from out of the blue as fully-formed new philosophers when they are catapulted into the contented and peaceful lives of Emma and her family by the unluckiest, if most fictionally conventional, of accidents - their carriage overturning outside her door. But this question of how new philosophy was transmitted to the likes of Sceptic, Axiom and Waldorf, to Glenmurray, Dorothea and George Warrington, from whom it would pass onto others, was always a central consideration for literary anti-Jacobinism, for these Fantom-figures were the representatives of the reader in the novel, members of the middling ranks, as More had put it, who needed to be told not only to avoid infecting their inferiors, but also how to protect themselves from the contagion.

It might be supposed that within the class structure inherent in the Fantom trope, with philosophers of the middle ranks corrupting domestics lacking in the economic security and critical faculties to render them immune to its lure, the most likely source of the Jacobinism taken up by the new philosophers might have been from their economic and social superiors. This was, to an extent, true for many of the more Evangelically-inclined anti-Jacobins who, following the sort of lead offered by Hannah More elsewhere, sought to amend the manners of the great as much as those of the people with least stake in society. Yet to extrapolate from the descent of the new philosophy from masters to servants, from the educated and discriminating to the uninformed and undiscerning, to conclude that these pestilential doctrines therefore generally percolated down a socio-economic hierarchy, or one constructed according to the level of education available, would be mistaken. Those in society's élite, those in the ranks above Fantom and his peers, feature in anti-Jacobin literature as dupes to the same, if not a greater, extent as those at the bottom of the scale, albeit for different reasons. They were presented as just as vulnerable to the allure of new philosophy, for it was their vanity, and their desire to conform with the *ton*, that attracted them to vogueish, that is to say *new*, philosophy, and by inviting new philosophers into their houses, they were being just as credulous as the servants attracted to their principles for more material reasons.

The distance between aristocratic pride and new philosophy's strictures was often shown to be virtually negligible. When Lord Belfield, Vaurien's host in London, insisted that his ducal insignia be affixed even to every cart in his possession, for instance, it giving him great pleasure to single out his carts

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<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* [2nd edn., London, 1800], III, 56-57.

from the commonality, the new philosophers he had gathered around him applauded it as a deliberate effort to degrade every appendage of nobility.<sup>17</sup> The philosophers were wrong, of course, it being Belfield's constant endeavour to exalt aristocracy in every possible way, the very preoccupation, indeed, to which they owed their welcome in his house. Indeed, from the number of novels that show us these degenerate aristocrats dabbling in philosophy, we might conclude that it actually *was* the ton to sponsor such new philosophers. Jean Le Noir, for example, in Pye's *Democrat* (1795), visits a lord who, not content with his great wealth and status, desires to be 'a fomenter of discord, and the head of an unprincipled faction', whilst Sir Caprice Ardent, in Hamilton's *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, gathers around him Messrs. Axiom and Sceptic, Puzzledorf and Ergo, before growing tired with that pastime and switching his enthusiasm to Methodism.<sup>18</sup>

If the hierarchy that existed for the transmission of new philosophy through society was not class based, then, who was it who so nefariously planted the seeds of new philosophy amongst the loyal and contented population of Britain, and more especially amongst More's 'middling rank'? If we consult her original *History of Mr Fantom*, she is not quite explicit, and remains apparently deliberately vague in citing the desire to distinguish himself as the principal motivation for Fantom's new philosophy, and 'a famous little book, written by the NEW PHILOSOPHER, whose pestilent doctrines have gone about seeking whom they may destroy' as his particular inspiration.<sup>19</sup> However, even though More, rather oddly, appears to have endowed the doctrines themselves with the quality of self-dissemination, we certainly get the sense that she posited Fantom as merely the latest in a line of recipients of new philosophy, and it may be confidently assumed she meant her readers to understand Thomas Paine to be its great progenitor, an implication that later editions of her works make plain with their footnotes. Paine was a marvellously convenient common ancestor for all new philosophy in Britain, the double-barrelled attack of his *Rights of Man* and *Age of Reason* giving Jacobinism an all-encompassing breadth united in one man which might have had to be invented had they not already existed. Certainly we can see More's lead being taken up if we return to *The History of Sir George Warrington*. The new philosophy of both 'Squire Thornton and the political quixote himself, joint corruptors of Benjamin Potter, are attributed to Paine, Sir George's contamination precisely traceable to the parcel of books which contained *Rights of Man* and Potter recalling that Thornton had been always talking of Paine and repeating that he was the first man in the kingdom, even if only a staymaker.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Isaac D'Israeli, *Vaurien: or, Sketches of the Times* [London, 1797], I, 31-38.

<sup>18</sup> Henry James Pye, *The Democrat: Interspersed with Anecdotes of Well Known Characters* [1795; London, 1796], II, 90; Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 344.

<sup>19</sup> More, 'History of Mr Fantom', in *Works of Hannah More* [London, 1840], I, 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington*, I, 32-33 and 106.



However, the author of *George Warrington* presents another figure in the hierarchy of new philosophers, an intermediate link in the chain that attaches Paine and Sir George, responsible for leading the political quixote into the most idiotic, and dangerous, of his errors. This is a Mr Davenport, himself a victim of the opinions of the Fantom-like new philosopher Mr Wilmot, but a willing victim and one whose republican and atheistical sympathies are sustained by no genuine belief, save the conviction that they might be profitable to him. All this is exhibited in his introduction:

Having nothing to lose, and depending solely on his patrons for subsistence, he of course followed them in their adherence to the party formed in favour of the French Revolution and was by them deputed to gain as many votaries as possible to their side.<sup>21</sup>

Davenport selects Sir George as his prey, and draws him into avowing such republican sentiments as will lay him open to the charge of treason, and to withdrawing such sums from his bankers, ostensibly for the nation's defence but really pocketed by Davenport, as will make them impugn him. Worse still, though, he encourages Sir George to export further his spirit of mutiny to others, enlisting him, under false pretences, as the leader of a campaign by local workers for higher wages. In fact, the workers pressing for an amelioration of their lot are merely those made poor by their own licentiousness, for Davenport ensures that Sir George sees only their hovels, and not the happy homes of the industrious villagers. The consequences of Davenport's machinations come quickly as the rebelliousness which he has inspired in Sir George is communicated to the rabble of angry workers he leads to confront Mr Annesley, their employer. They become animated by the baronet's evident, if limited, insurgency, and grow unruly and violent. They attack constables leading a notorious poacher to gaol, freeing him and tying up the officers of the law, and proceed as an ungovernable mob to attack the local landowner's house, even though he had nothing to do with their original and ostensible complaint. Eventually, Sir George is compelled by his own innate virtue to resist their threat by force, and indeed, the incident partially effects his repudiation of new philosophy. But the process by which the principle of rebellion against the *status quo*, in theory in the new philosopher's case, and then in practice at the hands of the mob, has trickled down from Davenport and his fellow Jacobins to the multitude, using Sir George as a conduit, is what remains the most conspicuous theme of the episode. And these were the three essential components of the hierarchy of Jacobinism - the villainous vaurien, the foolish new philosopher, and the mob that, knowing no better, put their schemes into shocking practice.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, as the reader is made continually aware, Davenport's scheme was designed neither to address the grievances of the workers, nor to further the aims of the 'party', as he calls the Jacobin interest for which he is theoretically an agent, for, we soon discover, he had a private grievance against Mr Annesley, and saw Sir George as the weapon with which to gain revenge. This is significant, for such

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<sup>21</sup> Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington*, II, 52-53.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., *History of Sir George Warrington*, II, 127-28, 194-97 and III, 33-38.

selfishness and, indeed, such a-politicalness, is the hallmark of the vaurien, the rôle which Davenport plays with aplomb. It is this characterisation that explains why anti-Jacobins filled their novels with vaurien figures. The Fantom motif was explicitly designed to convince a middling-rank readership, largely supposed by authors to be reading their novels, of the dangers in even trifling with new philosophy without the necessity of actually debating the finer, or blunter, points of its doctrine, for such politicisation of fiction would have been both a literary and ideological transgression. New philosophy's principal fault, the novelists implied, was simply that it was such an eminently exportable commodity, and would be transmitted to parts of the community entirely unable to see through its lures and all too willing to endeavour to make its idle dreams real. The vaurien was a second technique which, without having to address new philosophy head on and in its own terms, without having to engage in political controversy, perfectly demonstrated new philosophy's hollowness, exhibiting the fact that, from its source onwards, Jacobinism had nothing to do with any genuine concern for the nation or its population, or for anything so pure as truth, political justice or the rights of man, but was merely a subterfuge for the age-old vices of a number of mischievous individuals. Such persons were the vauriens, figures who were always at the head of the hierarchy of Jacobinism, no matter what their social or economic status, their mental capabilities, nationality or gender. Whether they were a member of the aristocracy, such as the Lord James Marauder, the Infernal Quixote, a member of the gentry or middle class, like Glenmurray in *Adeline Mowbray* or Marat in *Adelaide de Narbonne*, or from the most obscure of origins, as were enumerable others - whether they were French agents or indigenously-reared rogues - whether they were coquettes or rakes - the one thing that remained constant was their regard not for what they could do for Jacobinism, but what Jacobinism could do for them and them alone.

## 2 *The vaurien*

Vaurien himself, the anti-hero of D'Israeli's novel, as well as being rather atypical in certain respects, does not provide the earliest example of this most common of figures in the anti-Jacobin novel. And although it would serve no particular purpose to quest after the very first identifiable vaurien, especially since the trope gradually evolved in the hands of the numerous novelists who used it in the 1790s and beyond, a good starting point would seem to be offered by the unequivocally named Judas Mac'Serpent, villain not of a novel, but of the narrative which fills the anonymous pamphlet *Liberty and Equality; Treated of in a Short History addressed from A Poor Man to His Equals*, published in, or slightly before, 1792.

A number of episodes in this thirty-nine page pamphlet would become conventional in novels over the next dozen or so years. The 'Poor Man' of the title, for instance, our protagonist, figures as the sort of political quixote already familiar to us, a dupe taken in by the sophistry of Mac'Serpent, who is

himself almost immediately recognisable as a vaurien by his appearance and demeanour - 'a thin, pale-faced fellow, whose looks, to be sure, were no great things in his favour, but then he was as clever a body to speak as you shall meet with amongst a thousand' - and by his activities, for he was one of those 'artful men who would persuade us it is for our own interest to join them, in asserting our liberty, (as they call it) by subverting the present order of things, and making every one *Equal*.'<sup>23</sup> We are also shown the real motives of Mac'Serpent's own proselytising campaign. When he attempts to sue the honest Joe Thomas for assault, the blacksmith having punched the orator for suggesting that Britons are slaves, a letter is brought forward by the local 'Squire which exposes Mac'Serpent as a French agent, paid four livres a day by the National Convention for doing all in his power 'to create disturbances in different parts of England, so as to promote the views of France, which are,' the letter helpfully explains, 'first to ruin, and then to subdue your island.'<sup>24</sup> Needless to say, Mac'Serpent meets his fate at the hands of the British judicial system.

Although much of this would be carried over into numerous anti-Jacobin novels, the continuities are perhaps less significant than that which would be altered. Most apparently, the tenor of such narratives would be changed for the novel form, which, however great appeared the fears that the novel had recently found a new audience among the lower orders of society, was still not directed by 'A Poor Man to His Equals' as this tract purported to be. If we compare D'Israeli's *Vaurien*, for instance, we find that the Jacobin villain is aiming to seduce not the sort of countryfolk attracted to the ale-house at which Mac'Serpent held sway, but that section of the British public who felt better represented by the novel's protagonists, Charles, a parson's son just arrived in London from the country, cousin to Lord and Lady Belfield, and by Emily, daughter of a Lieutenant in the navy, only recently descended into straitened circumstances. But a second difference, and perhaps with more far-reaching consequences for anti-Jacobin fiction, was that in novels the vaurien figure would on the whole be endowed with a slightly altered motivation, just as self-serving in principle perhaps, but without the salary from France to formalise the treachery, and without the same degree of personal spite against his native land possessed by Mac'Serpent.

In D'Israeli's *Vaurien*, however, these distinctions are rather blurred. Like Mac'Serpent, Vaurien himself we find to be a Frenchman, well practised at spreading the new philosophy so as to foment revolt, already having a long career of insurgency behind him in more or less every European nation, as well as America and the Ottoman Empire, and who at last has turned his attention to Britain. Once there, indeed, we see him walking the streets of London, meditating on the ease with which riots could be induced, fires

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<sup>23</sup> Anon, *Liberty and Equality; Treated of in a Short History addressed from A Poor Man to His Equals* [London, 1792], pp.5-6. *The Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue* gives the author as Ralph Sneyd, and records no earlier edition than this, which calls itself 'the third'.

<sup>24</sup> 'To affect this,' the letter continues, 'you must mix, as much as possible, with the lower orders of the people, and endeavour to make them discontented with their present situation, and jealous of those above them; repeat frequently that every thing is shamefully too dear, and that wages are shamefully too low.' Anon, *Liberty and Equality; Treated of in a Short History*, pp.21-22.

started and bombs planted, and he is anxious, for obvious and sinister reasons, to examine the armoury at the Tower of London and the dock-yards at Plymouth. Additionally, Vaurien's principal aim, once in Britain, is ostensibly to enlist the forces of discontent - Scottish philosophers, Dissenting preachers, Jews, clergymen wanting preferment, and, of course, political radicals - into a phalanx of sedition that could deliver the long anticipated Revolution. Such malcontents, Vaurien identifies, had long nursed their grievances, but had never attempted to redress them by any of the inflammatory means he now suggests, and Rant, Dragon, Subtile and the others, for all their rhetoric, had failed to mobilise the fools and knaves of Britain. Yet, if Vaurien was a French *agent provocateur*, it was only on a free-lance basis, perhaps as one of the secret ambassadors who had undoubtedly, Charlotte Smith assured us, been sent to Britain to rabble-rouse, but certainly not, like Mac'Serpent, being paid from the coffers of the Revolutionary government.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, he lives off the patronage of the credulous Belfields, and is at all times anxious to maintain their interest in new philosophy because his livelihood depends upon it.

Similarly, although Vaurien claims that the ruin of a young woman was a diversion from his real aims and that 'It is only national treasons which I feel as my genius,' not only does he apply the same skills to both his public and private intrigues, but the campaigns he wages to subvert the nation and to seduce Emily progress in tandem. Vaurien first hatches his plan for the ruin of Emily, for instance, when he finds circumstances propitious - 'And her father is quite blind?' - a question he asks with a relish identical to that he had expressed upon discovering the ease with which St. Paul's Cathedral might be set on fire. Indeed, much more of the novel is devoted to Vaurien's assault on the virtue of Emily than is to his grand Revolutionary project. In both these spheres, D'Israeli forces us to conclude with Vaurien, 'The French... have very inventive heads, and the English very unsuspicious hearts', and unlike Mac'Serpent, Vaurien's motives are always two-fold, half personal and half political.<sup>26</sup>

This is a pattern one might expect in the novel, always written to some extent as a work of entertainment, however much of the political pamphlet's didactic intent remained. In fact, in some pamphlets Thomas Paine himself was being re-fashioned in the vaurien mould. His portrayal by John Gifford, for one, concentrated on his stay-making, debt, theft, Sabbath-breaking, wife-beating, perjury, bigamy, impotence, and possible sexual deviance, before addressing the errors of his political thought, and, in *Liberty and Equality* itself, we are treated to a conflation of Paine's opinions and his personal life, a technique designed to encourage our mirth and our scorn in equal measures.<sup>27</sup> In other anti-Jacobin

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<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Banished Man*, II, 84. Smith seems serious in this assertion, perhaps wanting to establish her conservative credentials after the pro-Revolutionary sentiments of *Desmond* (1792), but she returns to her usual sceptical satire with Sir Maynard Ellesmere's contention that the local presbyterians are undoubtedly agents of France, a subject upon which he discourses 'with a degree of vehemence, which no other topic could excite' (III, 8).

<sup>26</sup> D'Israeli, *Vaurien*, II, 318, I, 247 and I, 219.

<sup>27</sup> John Gifford, *A Plain Address to the Common Sense of the People of England, Containing an Interesting Abstract of Pain's [sic] Life and Writing* [London?, 1792], passim. See also William Oldys [possibly a pseudonym for George Chalmers], *Life of Thomas Paine* [n.d., but 1791?], which includes a similar litany of transgressions and perversions.



novels, although it was important that this blend of personal debauchery and political corruption was maintained, the balance between the two tilted so that Mac'Serpent's public motives, that is to say political, even if never quite ideological, motives, as symbolised by his payment from France, became less and less significant. The progression from public to private villain becomes remarkably conspicuous in the comparison of other early conservative novels with those that would come later, but is also sometimes evident within individual novels. Henry James Pye's *Democrat* of 1795, for instance, one of the first anti-Jacobin novels, presents the balance still tilted more towards public villainy. Like his fellow Frenchman Vaurien, Jean Le Noir had always been found wherever there was mischief afoot. Like a rabid dog, and with the sort of internationalism we recognise from Richard Price's conception of the spread of liberty throughout the world, Le Noir carried the germ of republicanism along a well-travelled trail. From America, where he had fought for independence from the British, to France, where he soon became friends with Robespierre, Marat and Paine, he naturally, 'turned his thoughts anxiously to the idea of introducing a system of equalisation and fraternity between the *degenerate* Britons, and his own regenerated countrymen.'<sup>28</sup> Once there he occupied the same rôle as freelance French agent as Vaurien had done, constantly intent on inciting rebellion, and the novel becomes a fairly conventional picaresque journey around Britain, remarkable only because Pye shows Le Noir's continual disappointment that there existed so little genuine revolutionary sentiment wherever he looks. He seems to fit into the mould of a Mac'Serpent, but Le Noir was not wholly the political reprobate, even if it was only before his hero arrived in Britain that Pye showed the personal side to Le Noir's machinations, presenting the genesis of his avowal of new philosophy as being sited wholly in the attempt to satisfy his appetites, material, social, and sexual. 'He was particularly attentive to the equalization of property;' Pye tells us,

so that if any other boy in the village had a larger proportion of nuts, apples, or grapes, than the rest, or happened to be distinguished by so striking a mark of partiality of fortune as the accumulation of a few sols, he make no scruple of reducing his opulence more to a level with his companions by appropriating a part of it for himself; in which appropriation, however, it is not to be denied that he sometimes took a much larger share than the strict rules of equality would justify.<sup>29</sup>

This established, it underlies our understanding of his campaign to foment revolution throughout the novel. But Pye's somewhat crude attempt to fuse the public and private vices of Le Noir merely emphasises the success with which later novelists would incorporate a much greater degree of personal motivation, at the expense of the more public impetus for their villainy, to indict their Jacobins.

Certainly by the turn of the century, significantly after France herself had ceased to be an ideological threat (precisely because, of course, she was now such a military menace), it becomes rather difficult to isolate the political drive of the vauriens, so submerged is it in their private designs. *Dorothea*;

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<sup>28</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, I, 10-12.

<sup>29</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, I, 3-4.

or, *A Ray of the New Light*, of 1801, offers a relatively good view of the discernibly political strategy of its vaurien, Thomas Williams, but even here, with his overtly political involvement with the United Irishmen and his successful attempt to incite the mob to attack Kilkenny gaol (bringing to mind such political realities as the Gordon Riots and the fall of the Bastille), all is not as it seems. Though Williams goaded the mob to action by enraging them against the 'tyrannical' arrest of the leaders of the attempted rebellion just put down, his real aim, we find, was to engineer the release of a rich Dublin boy, who had been led away from the straight and narrow at his college by the high-flown orations of a set of reformers, and to return him to his father and collect the reward which the father would no doubt provide. And this personal agenda is exactly in keeping with all we have learned of Williams so far, for remembering his introduction into the narrative, as a young student at Oxford, resentful of those who succeeded there with less ability but more money, we know that he adopted the Jacobinism that would bring him to Kilkenny only for personal gain. Indeed, he evidently did not believe a word of the new philosophy peddled by his Jacobinical associates at Oxford, but resolved not to let that stand in the way of the opportunities it seemed to offer:

The absurdity and impossibility of their plans Williams had early detected; but, said he, I already know that not all men are equally clear-sighted. If these specious reasoners get the ear of the multitude, who knows what consequences may arise? An epoch of confusion is, perhaps, the only one in which, circumstanced as I am, I can expect to reach my proper sphere: to me then it is most desirable, and it is a *duty* I owe myself, to lend a hand to the cause which alone is likely to place me where I ought to be.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, as the novel progresses, we find that Williams' new philosophical acquaintances at Oxford, men who (perfectly illustrating the hierarchy of Jacobinism) adopted new philosophy only because it seemed fashionable and quickly dropped it without realising the damage done to their social inferiors, were the exception, and that Williams himself, with his personally-motivated Jacobinism, was the rule. The United Irishmen, to whom Williams soon becomes secretary and treasurer, were certainly cast from the same mould as him:

These active spirits, with a very few exceptions, were composed of a certain set, who having neither name, fortune, or principle to lose, were willing to take the chance of a scene of confusion; in the belief, that where property is exposed to the scramble, the most agile will be the greatest gainers; more particularly if they are wholly careless through what channel it comes, they labourer therefore, indefatigably planting the tree of liberty in the mould of discontent, and waiting with impatience the signal to moisten it with human blood.<sup>31</sup>

This was a nest of vauriens in other words, with their own interest their only aim, but together forming that most dangerous of links in the Jacobin chain which bound together the new philosophers such as

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<sup>30</sup> Anon., *Dorothea*, II, 40-44 and I, 32-33.

<sup>31</sup> Anon., *Dorothea*, II, 134.

those Williams knew at Oxford at one end, and the mob at the other. Moreover, of course, this insight into Jacobinism's motives exhibited the full horror of such a system to anyone who had even the least stake in the *status quo*, who had anything at all to lose in the 'scramble' which they aimed to induce.

The deceitful attempts of vauriens to enlist the support of the lower orders with a populist plan for the redistribution of wealth which they never intended to implement was one of the prongs which Burke had taken up in his attempt to deflate the Revolution and all it stood for. He had warned that the plunder of the rich would 'give but a share inconceivably small to the many', and portended that 'those who lead them to repine, never intend this distribution' in any case.<sup>32</sup> Pye's *Le Noir*, on his tour of Britain, disconsolately confirms this, discovering that any 'persons possessing even a moderate share of property,... however fond they might be of theoretical equality, they were not fond of hazarding any step towards the practical part.'<sup>33</sup> Others found the same. At one end of the financial scale, Lord Belfield, in *Vaurien*, refused to stand any talk of economic levelling in his house. And at the other (the end, in fact, at which most Jacobins were to be found, as evinced by Frederick's surprise on discovering Dr Alogos to be a rich man, 'for he had found the pupils of the new school, in general, a little short in financial affairs'), Citizen Ego, an itinerant orator in the Jacobin cause, evidently regarded new philosophy as nothing but a money-making scheme. He charged admission to his lectures, urged his auditors at every opportunity to give generously, did not fail to remind them where they could purchase copies of his speeches, and, lest his debating society should lose fee-paying members, forged letters from various parts of the country recounting atrocities committed by government agents and urging the club to continue in its good works.<sup>34</sup>

This self-interest, the key trait of all vauriens, was most evident when it was forcefully contrasted with the altruism of the true patriot. Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, with his customary crassness, was continually reminding his readers that his hero, Arthur Fitz-Albini, 'felt no satisfaction in employing his thoughts upon himself or his own affairs' and thought it 'of little consequence... what may be the state of [his] private circumstances', and actually found his mind soothed 'by extending its reflections to the state of the nation' - all of which was by way of contrast with the 'adherents of a certain party,' who thought only of themselves, and

who console the envy and malignity of their hearts at the inferior situations in which it is their lot to be placed, with hopes of an early change, when it will be their turn to triumph, and trample on the necks of those, who now, according to their ideas, oppress them.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 102.

<sup>33</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, II, 159.

<sup>34</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 4; I, 79-83 and 88.

<sup>35</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini. A Novel* [1798; London, 1799], II, 40-42.

It was a distinction continually re-echoed, Sarah Green making it the central lesson of her *Reformist!!!* of 1810, the preface of which spelled out that 'Self-interest governs, in a great measure, the whole world; and the political reformist is only eager to get into place, while ministers and placemen are anxious to keep theirs.'<sup>36</sup> Even if Green was talking of those seeking parliamentary reform rather than any more revolutionary goal, this merely emphasises the point, for, as other novelists made clear, the vaurien found the parliamentary opposition his natural habitat - not because a vaurien would have any particular principles in common with Fox, Sheridan, or Burdett, say, but because they would, in the view of many a Pittite novelist, both share the same absence of integrity. In Wildman's *Force of Prejudice* (1799), for instance, we see Sir William Clementson, 'all that we can possibly suppose of moral depravity', supporting the opposition in the Regency Crisis of 1788-89, hoping - as was Fox, we are given to understand - for great personal gains from the installation of the Prince of Wales as Regent, and having no concern for the effect of such a move on the nation as a whole.<sup>37</sup>

Most powerfully, though, the personal agenda of the vaurien which lay behind their ostensible aims was not expressed in these economic or political terms, as the pursuit of money or status, but was couched more in terms of personal debauchery. Clearly, new philosophy could be used as an infinitely malleable means to make some personal profit or as an entirely ductile screen for some obscure personal resentment, but for most of those who employed its rhetoric its purpose was clear: lust. This is not to say that the vaurien's desire for property and power, and his or her licentiousness were not eminently compatible. We have already noticed that Vaurien's assault on Emily, which filled so much of D'Israeli's novel, ran parallel with his political machinations, and the career of Wildman's Clementson we might likewise trace from his support for the Prince of Wales' party to the debauching of the young daughter of one of his fellow Foxites. The same is apparent in *Dorothea's* Thomas Williams, who manages to combine his private avarice and licentiousness (which themselves are fused) with his public Jacobinical activities. Having arrived in Dublin to find that Ireland is not quite ready for revolt, Williams 'took advantage of this breathing time, to consider how his private interest might be furthered in another way' - that is, how he might get his hands on the £5000 of the orphaned Catherine O'Neale. It proves an easy matter to accomplish, and when he has married her, without her guardian's consent, appropriated her

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<sup>36</sup> Green, *The Reformist!!! A serio-comic political novel* [London, 1810], I, iv.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Wildman, *The Force of Prejudice, A Moral Tale* [London, 1799], II, 202-203. Compare Charles Lucas' description of an opposition M.P., made through the mouth of Mr Wiffle in *The Castle of St. Donats; or, the History of Jack Smith* [London, 1798], which exhibits exactly the same selfishness at the expense of his nation's good. Such a man is chosen as an M.P., likely as not, says Wiffle, because of the influence of his family whose money comes from slavery, yet he continues to maintain that he hopes for the abolition of the slave-trade. Likewise, he speaks of the misery of the current war with France, yet only objects to it in reality because of its detrimental effect on his slaving interests (III, 209-10). 'These are the wretches,' Lucas' hero responds, apparently referring to Fox (one of the 'leaders of a party') 'that throw a blemish on the honourable name of patriot; to hear such a one cry out upon the praise of humanity, justice, and liberty, makes the very name of virtue suspected and feared' (III, 210-11).



fortune, fathered a son, and run off leaving her with only self-absolving sections of *Political Justice* for comfort, he is open to our condemnation for his rakishness as much as his rapaciousness.<sup>38</sup>

The exposure of Jacobinism as nothing but a front for licentiousness was based, of course, on the bridgehead established by the revelation that all new philosophy, as postulated by Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and others, was primarily an attack on affectional relationships, something explored in the previous chapter. New philosophy itself, indeed, was so inherently debauched that it could turn a promising young hero, like Frederick Fenton in Walker's *Vagabond*, into the worst of villains, a very Lovelace. His arguments bolstered with quotations from *Political Justice*, he attempts to convince Laura, the idol of his heart, that a single man's possession of one woman for his whole life is a gross monopoly, an opinion that he has already put into practice by the seduction, accompanied by a quite daunting self-righteousness on his part, of his oldest friend's fiancée. It comes as no surprise to us when Laura responds with arguments of her own, dismissing new philosophy contemptuously. But Frederick is taken aback by her contentions, or rather her willingness to exercise rational arguments against him, and we witness the first internal, and unconscious, alteration of his philosophy in response to what he thinks her 'perverseness'. Frederick had often reasoned with Laura, had always respected her opinions, and had insisted that it was only education that distinguished women from men, but when faced with her sustained opposition to his advances, it slowly dawns on him that women must lack the capacity to understand new philosophy. Indeed,

he began almost to think that women were beings made for the pleasures of men, a gilded toy, which a great metaphysician and philosopher might condescend to play with when he quitted the Hall of Contemplation, and ventured from the paths of intellectual rambling to the gross pavement of life.<sup>39</sup>

'She reasons as if she had reason,' Frederick thinks, 'but it is quite in the old style', and he realises that she can therefore be nothing other than 'a blank, a mere white sheet of paper', a familiar idea to adherents of the new school of course, and that it remained for him 'to stamp upon her any character I please.' And Frederick's theorising continues to evolve in tandem with his libido. Increasingly desperate, his sophistry makes the final leap into a licentiousness so deep that it can obviate all the curbs on behaviour that society imposes, and nullify all the esteem he once felt for the object of his passion. Walker charts his reasoning in full:

It is the universal good and greatest resulting benefit we are ever to have in view,... all the great men of the eighteenth century tell us we must not regard any contingencies, these being only partial and unavoidable evils. It is plain the world must be peopled; for if it is not peopled, we philosophers would have nobody to revolutionize, and reason, and logic, and ignorance, would be tantamount to the same. This then is the self-demonstrated hypothesis; this then is the grand basis to build upon; and as all

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<sup>38</sup> Anon., *Dorothea*, II, 17-34.

<sup>39</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 27 and 31-32.

things depend upon peopling the world, it follows that to people the world is the most meritorious action of life. But how am I to contribute to this greatest good, if Laura persists in her notions of matrimony? It is impossible. I should then surrender my freedom, and freedom is even a *greater* good *than* life itself. Some middle-way must be devised; and though I abhor giving pain to any creature under the heavens, yet I must not be deterred from peopling the world, by the tears of a woman who even does not know the great maxims of philosophy. What are tears? Mere bubbles of water emitted from a particular stimulus of the nerves of the eye: women have weaker nerves than men, therefore tears from them are more common.- As to fainting, that also depends on weak nerves: - some will faint at the sight of a rat. Well, I can't help the irritability of the nervous system: - A charming idea indeed! that, because women have weak nerves, the world is not to be peopled!

Ultimately, even this faith in the power of reason evaporates in the heat of his lust. Still unable to prevail, his philosophy finally vanishes to reveal only that which animates it, and he 'resolved to supply his want of persuasion by violence, beginning with those liberties often allowed, till his passions throwing him off his guard, he exerted that prowess which men are endowed with for other purposes.'<sup>40</sup> Clearly, his much vaunted new philosophy, so superior, as he maintained, to the accumulated and now rejected wisdom of the ages, was nothing but a cloak for his vice.

Yet this was precisely why Frederick was not a vaurien, but a vaurien's dupe. New philosophy, as postulated by the anti-Jacobins (and it had its existence nowhere else), was inherently wicked and had poisoned Frederick, perverting his reasoning (always more dubious than his feeling), and worse, destroying the institutionalised rules of civilised behaviour, the social super-ego, its 'prejudices' as the new philosophers called them, and thereby exposing and releasing the base desires which lay beneath. But if Frederick was *made* a rake, contaminated by his proximity to, and adoption of, new philosophy, the true vaurien started off that way, quite deliberately employing new philosophy for his or her already established aims. So fundamental is this to anti-Jacobin fiction, that for Laura, in *The Vagabond*, to opine that 'I do sincerely believe that those men who preach up promiscuous intercourse of sex do it merely to cover their own depraved desires', is little more than a truism.<sup>41</sup> It is most graphically illustrated in the novels set in the French Revolution itself, which, from *Lindor and Adelaïde* in 1791 to *The Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro* a generation later, depict their vauriens using the Revolution and Jacobin doctrine, even managing to manipulate them, merely to gratify their own depraved desires. In Sayer's novel, it was Antoine who persecuted Adelaïde when Lindor had died at the hands of the Jacobin mob, pressing his suit with questions about what difference the blessing of a priest or the empty ceremony of marriage could possibly make to a lover, such as he plans to force Adelaïde to become.<sup>42</sup> In Stanhope's, it was Charles Angerville who 'leagued himself with the assassins of his king' just so that he might gain possession of

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<sup>40</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 32, 33, 34-36 and 43..

<sup>41</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 24.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde, a Moral Tale* [London, 1791], pp.285-88.

Helena, the wife of his friend, De Beaufort, who had, like the hero he was, taken up arms against the Revolution.<sup>43</sup> In *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805) the pattern is even more pronounced, the author continually reiterating that the Marquis de Chevreuille had been a villain of the deepest dye under the *ancien régime*, and would continue to be so under any administration, and that he looked upon the Revolution, which had allowed him to return to France from the exile imposed after the violation of his sister-in-law, merely as the perfect opportunity to pursue the beautiful Eugenie. It was a project all too easily accomplished too, since her 'disaffection to the present order of things' (which, of course, was to be expected of any self-respecting heroine) meant that a word in the ear of his Revolutionary friends, Marat amongst them, would be sufficient to force her to submit to him or 'bow to the Statue of Liberty'.<sup>44</sup>

Naturally, the historically authentic architects of the Revolution were the very worst of vauriens themselves, men who had engineered the Revolution, if the opinion of several British novelists is to be believed, purely to gratify their desire for innocent heroines. In *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800), Craik shows Marat designing legislation purely to gain Adelaide as his wife, a plan he reinforces by immuring her until she agrees.<sup>45</sup> It is a tactic echoed by the mysterious 'Count' in Moore's *Mordaunt* (1800), who, with the assistance of his friends the Revolutionary commissioners Collot D'Herbois and Couthon, has arranged for the imprisonment of the object of his desire, the Marquise, so that he may offer her freedom in return for her acquiescence to his proposal of marriage.<sup>46</sup> In Robinson's *Natural Daughter* (1799), Mrs Sedgeley finds herself incarcerated in the Abbaye gaol and is visited by a disguised man who offers to set her free if she will give herself to him. When she refuses, he promises to add her name to the list of victims of the guillotine, for, she recalls, 'I now discovered that the barbarian inquisitor was the despot Marat', whose assassination the following day is all that allows her to live to tell the tale. Along with Robespierre's passion for the heroine's sister, Robinson appears to suggest that the leading Jacobins were united in nothing so much as their weakness for British gentlewomen foolish enough to visit Revolutionary France.<sup>47</sup>

The Marquis de Chevreuille, 'the Count', Marat and Robespierre - these were all essentially villains straight out of a gothic novel, a portrayal made possible by a combination of the truly barbarous events of the Terror and the anti-Jacobins' deliberate envisioning, from Burke onwards, of Revolutionary France in highly gothic terms. Marat, persecuting innocent and defenceless heroines, whom he had

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<sup>43</sup> Lousia Sidney Stanhope, *The Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro. A Tale* [London, 1818], III, 184.

<sup>44</sup> That is to be executed by the guillotine. Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* [London, 1805], I, 110-14 and II, 81.

<sup>45</sup> Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne*, III, 265-70. The Revolutionary decree that Craik has Marat enact 'really existed', she insists in a note. By it, 'each woman was to receive the first offer of marriage that was made to her by any man whatsoever, be his character, situation, principles, or employment what it might, even if he should be the murderer of a father, a child, nay, of a husband himself, to whose nuptial rights he offered to succeed' (III, 267 and n.).

<sup>46</sup> John Moore, *Mordaunt. Sketches of Life, Characters, and Manners, in Various Countries* [London, 1800], II, 63-69.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Robinson, *The Natural Daughter. With Portraits of the Leadenhead Family* [London, 1799], I, 209-13 and II, 266-67.

incarcerated in gaols under his personal control, and in which he might visit them in disguise, bearing threats or promises of freedom, reminds us of no-one so much as Ann Radcliffe's Montoni, endeavouring to cajole or compel Emily to marry him as she is imprisoned in the Castle of Udolpho. In those anti-Jacobin novels set in a contemporary Britain, where it was an article of ideology that this kind of gothic persecution was inconceivable, a similar licentiousness remained the defining characteristic of the vaurien, but he or she appeared in the traditional guise of the rake, or his female equivalent, the coquette. They used new philosophy as Marat used the Revolution, appropriating its rhetoric and its devious and delusive tenets to co-opt their proposed victims into compliance with their nefarious schemes. They had little alternative since the gaols, guillotines and Revolutionary decrees with which villains in France were able to coerce their victims were for the most part, saving the odd private madhouse or isolated farmhouse, unavailable.

This is a point that has already become so apparent throughout the anti-Jacobin fiction that we have been examining that it requires little elaboration here. To take just a handful of examples already alluded to, we have seen Whitmore drag Emma into debauchery by attacking the 'formalities of the law' and 'the jargon of priestcraft' as utterly meaningless in *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest*; Lady Gertrude Sinclair attempting to inveigle Edmund Oliver into vice by revealing that the normal bonds of society were mere 'prejudices'; and Sir William Clementson, in Wildman's *Force of Prejudice*, assailing the virtue of Augusta with talk of marriage being 'only a civil institution for the more legal protection of property, and never solemnized at the altar until a very late period'.<sup>48</sup> We have witnessed Charles Denham in *The Citizen's Daughter* pursue his quarry with 'I know my adored Marianne, you are above the weak prejudice of an uninformed mind,' (which he later translates as, 'I could place you in some little cottage, where, unshackled by the restraints of tyrant custom, and unknown to my family, I could visit you'), and we have seen Marianne reject and expose his scheme, since 'contrary to all the enlightened doctrines of the new school,' she determines to persevere 'in the weak prejudices of conjugal felicity in preference to the philanthropic principles of nature and equality'.<sup>49</sup> And we have observed Sidney drawing the naïve Eliza into licentiousness with 'Mrs Wollstonecroft's [*sic*] divine work' in *Douglas*, and the Infernal Quixote using 'the wonderful arguments of William Godwin', as well as certain passages of Wollstonecraft, to undermine the morals of Emily, the object of his desire. In fact, in this latter case, Lucas more or less spells out the dichotomy between the ostensible purpose of the works Marauder had used, and the desired ends for which he has in fact used them, when he tells us that Marauder 'took every opportunity of

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<sup>48</sup> Helme, *Farmer of Inglewood Forest*, I, 211; Charles Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver* [Bristol, 1798], I, 35-36; Wildman, *Force of Prejudice*, II, 230-31.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., *The Citizen's Daughter; or What Might Be* [London, 1804], pp.90-91 and 232.



insinuating those principles *he conceived necessary for his purpose* into the mind of the too credulous Emily,' and would draw her attention to the new philosophers only 'if it suited his purpose.'<sup>50</sup>

In all these vauriens, whether French or British, we can hardly detect a political side to their machinations at all, save only that their rhetoric, the tool that they use, retains the outlined impression of its original intent. In fact, by the later '90s, so transparent had the actual intentions of the vaurien become, and so distinct from the nominal aims of the rhetoric which they used, that Jacobinism and new philosophy began to lose any identity of their own, and feature as nothing more than empty bombast, phrases no longer anchored to the demonised ideas, texts or individuals which the anti-Jacobins had originally picked out for obloquy. Thus, in *George Barnwell*, for instance, it is not Mental, the new philosopher, who takes centre stage as the real villain, the real vaurien, but Miss Milwood, who, though never exhibiting any sustained Jacobinism, and without any real radical credentials, becomes the focus of our contempt. When she does use the language of Jacobinism it is without conviction and almost as an after-thought, these passages seemingly inserted artificially by the author just as he had inserted the whole character of Mental into his adaptation of the Lillo play on which the novel was based. George, whom she has seduced into an illicit liaison and sundry criminal activity, demands that they must marry, to which she artfully replies, playing on his uncertain scepticism,

Do you allude to the mummery invented for the use of those, who have not faculties of their own to define the laws of nature? Am I the less yours -- are you the less your Milwood's, because a ceremony is omitted?

And when George finally discovers that his lover is already married, being a practised coquette, she can instantly summon up some of the rhetoric of new philosophy to excuse her adultery, beginning 'I know the jaundiced eye of prejudice, views it in all the hideous colourings of vice' before masked men, in her pay we later discover, burst in and 'kidnap' her.<sup>51</sup>

In the same year, and in more or less exactly the same terms, Gertrude Sinclair in Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* uncovers the reality of her seducer's new philosophy, discovering that he is married:

Great God! D'Oyley, and is it for this that we spurned at prejudice? - laughed at the forms of men? - Is it for this that we abandoned all institutions, and positive rules, and have thrown ourselves into the amazing depths of intellectual calculation, unbiased save by the character of the passing moment? ... I now understand too well your objections to marriage - your well feigned aversion to all the barriers in the generous impulses of an independent mind'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Bisset, *Douglas; or, the Highlander* [London, 1800], III, 87-88; Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, I, 134-36, 166-67 and 152. My emphasis.

<sup>51</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, II, 130 and 190.

<sup>52</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, II, 76-77.

Neither Milwood nor D'Oyley were Jacobins, if a Jacobin had actually to believe in Jacobinism. But if Surr and Lloyd had at least endowed their characters with a consciousness that they had taken up new philosophy, knowing what it was and what it could be used for, there were numerous other novelists, writing after the Revolution crisis had subsided, who, though they retained the vestige of Jacobin oratory, accompanied it with no acknowledgement of the provenance of such sentiments. Perhaps the clearest example of this we have already glanced at in the previous chapter, Charlotte Dacre presenting two assailants of the honour of Cazire, the heroine of *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805), one using all the sophistry of new philosophy and the other all the eloquence and artillery traditionally associated with the rake. As Cazire quickly identifies, there is no difference between them whatsoever, save the contrasting methods they have adopted to reach the same end. Fribourg may talk of 'prejudices' and 'necessity', but he differs not one iota from Lindorf who sends Cazire poetry and professes his adoration for her having thrown himself at her feet. She even expresses surprise when she suddenly realises that Fribourg reminds her of no-one so much as the French Revolutionaries, testament to the fact that the vaurien, though still speaking the language of Jacobinism, had drifted away from his original ideological mooring.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, in the anonymous *Leonard and Gertrude* (1800), Collins, very decidedly the villain of the piece being an ale-house rabble-rouser and an enemy of the exemplary 'squire, being another Judas Mac'Serpent in fact, attempts to incite the villagers to riot with talk of their 'rights' having been violated. Yet though this word forms the constant refrain of his rabble-rousing, he never enunciates a more distinct Jacobinism, nor any greater advocacy of new philosophy, and both the derivation, and the potentially calamitous ramifications, of his opinions remain unstated.<sup>54</sup> We see, in other words, the villain, generally a rake or coquette, having taken on all the characteristics of the vaurien, but having lost the very *raison d'être* of the rôle; we see men and women who are new philosophers according to their language but not in the least according to their objectives. The Jacobinism of D'Israeli's Vaurien, Pye's *Le Noir*, Walker's *Stupeo* or even Hamilton's *Vallaton*, however superficial this had been in itself, had evaporated to leave only a rhetorical residue.

What has been retained, though, in all the examples we have just been examining, were the signifiers of Jacobinism, its vocabulary, its cant phrases, and, indeed, its tendency to spread its poison to others (for the essence of the rake and coquette was that, like Jacobinism, they dragged others into their depravity too). What the vaurien's rhetoric and actions had originally signified, what words like 'prejudice' and 'superstition', or acts such as debauching an innocent woman or stealing her fortune - what these had originally meant in the context of the debate on the Revolution had been left behind, and even apparently forgotten by later novelists, but without losing any of the contempt for Jacobinism which was

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<sup>53</sup> Charlotte Dacre ['Rosa Matilda'], *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* [London, 1805], I, 89, 124-29, II, 70-71 and I, 129-30. It is perhaps significant that, unlike so many earlier conservative novels, Dacre did not spell out the link with British radicalism by foot-noting the new philosophical opinions of her villains.

<sup>54</sup> Anon., *Leonard and Gertrude. A Popular Story* [Bath, 1800], pp.48 and 272-73.

inherent in the portrayal of the vaurien. Essentially, such a method obviated the need for any actual debate of Jacobinism in the novels, being able to incite the reader's reprehension without the need to resort to any actual explanation of why Jacobin principles were so iniquitous.

It was the vaurien trope that enabled this to happen with such success, weaving new philosophy and Jacobinism into the fabric of novels in such a way as it could exist without the need to continue to explain the forces which had given it its birth. The vaurien became synonymous with Jacobinism, even though most vauriens, as we have seen, most manifestly did not believe a word of the Jacobinism that they preached. And in this lay the success of the anti-Jacobin novelists, for they had ruthlessly exposed Jacobinism as nothing but a cover for depravity, nothing but vice by another name. The exposure of the distinctly a-political *ends* of their Jacobinism was the perfect technique for discrediting the *means* by which such men and women attempted to achieve them. And if to appreciate that underneath their political garb, the vaurien was animated by nothing other than the age-old selfish, vain and thoroughly despicable desire for self-aggrandisement and personal gratification was to draw the fangs of the Jacobin threat, then it also demonstrated that Jacobinism and new philosophy offered nothing to anyone which they could genuinely want. Such a system as they showed their vauriens to espouse could not possibly have pretensions to ameliorate the lot of the British people, but served only to gratify the individuals who manipulated it. It could never provide anything beneficial to those whom it professed to succour. And as such, the fictional representation of Jacobinism returned to the point Burke had insisted upon in his *Reflections*, in which he might have been talking of the vaurien and providing a commentary on many an anti-Jacobin novel, when he spoke of 'those democratists, who, when they are not on their guard, treat the humbler part of the community with the greatest contempt, whilst, at the same time, they pretend to make them the depositories of all power.'<sup>55</sup> Far from being of any advantage to any novel-reader, indeed, the Jacobinism that these vauriens espoused was nothing but a threat to their property, their virtue and their lives.

Most impressively of all, perhaps, the vaurien enabled anti-Jacobin novelists to deny Jacobinism the status of a coherent and legitimate political or moral philosophy. Through the vaurien, we find that Jacobinism has no identity of its own, but is always only a cover for something else, whether it is their personal libertinism, the desire to grow rich at the expense of others, or sometimes merely personal spite. The vaurien, the wise Charles Maurice in *Edmund Oliver* knows, is 'A man who wills not to *do right*, but finds that all is right which *he wills*,' a man 'who has the happy talent of discovering that all *his desires* nicely adapt themselves to the most approved calculations of moral usefulness', a judgement from which no novelist demurred.<sup>56</sup> New philosophy was nothing but empty words, had no shape or substance independent of the debauched will that directed it. Its apparent adherents merely used such cant as would

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<sup>55</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 107.

<sup>56</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, I, 151-52.

achieve their licentious ends, a fact that Stupeo, in Walker's *Vagabond*, perfectly demonstrates. 'What is the use of words,' he challenges, speaking on behalf of all vauriens, 'if we are not to turn them to our advantage?'<sup>57</sup>

Stupeo's admission should act as a salutary caution to the modern analyst of anti-Jacobin fiction too. As we have already noted in respect of their use of what they themselves called 'new philosophy', anti-Jacobin novelists, despite what we might at first assume, neither aimed, nor actually attempted to counter any authentic radical principles in their work, but invented new philosophy, and provided their own definition of Jacobinism, to act as the targets for their attacks. The new philosophy they filled their novels with would not have been claimed by Paine, or Godwin, or anyone else, just as the portraits of Marat or Robespierre which they included were hardly drawn from life. The vaurien represents the apogee of this technique, their principal popinjay, meant to personify Jacobinism, but only the Jacobinism which they themselves had invented. It was a perfect technique, for they could make such a character exactly as vulnerable to their attacks as they chose. And such a figure already had a rôle ascribed to him or her in the novel, as rake or coquette, gothic villain or even a demon in disguise, as was the case in Sophia King's *Fatal Secret*. Having ensured that the individual they had created stood for the Jacobinism they strove to combat simply by the attribution to him or her of a few key signifying phrases, nothing could be simpler for the novelist than to indict radical principles as they proceeded with the unravelling of their plot.

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<sup>57</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 176.



## 6:      **Levellers, Nabobs and Nobles:**

### **The Novel's Defence of Hierarchy**

In the subordination and gradation of persons and rights, consists the very life and health of every well constructed state. In this political arrangement, made not by the wisdom or the will of man, but by the invisible hand of Providence, every man moves in that sphere of life, whether higher or lower, in which that Providence, not his own choice, has placed him at birth,

- Edward Tatham, *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke on Politics* (1791)

'It is so,' said Edward, 'the happiness, nay the very existence of society, depends upon the due subordination of its members, and the contentment with that station assigned to us by Providence.'

- Robert Dallas, *Percival, or Nature Vindicated. A Novel* (1801)

One of the principal reasons for the attack on the novel in the late eighteenth century was that it was said to encourage equality. It is a proposition with which numerous twentieth century scholars of the rise of the novel have agreed, contending that the eighteenth century novel was somehow an intrinsically 'bourgeois', or at least 'democratic', form, insisting that it stressed the equality of man because every character possessed an equal capacity to feel, to fall prey to adventures, to become a protagonist.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary critics of the novel, though, were worried less about the sudden elevation of a protagonist out of his social station, and more about the effect these texts were having on their readers, men and women who were, they feared, increasingly being recruited from the lower reaches of society. Such new readers, the opponents of the novel held, were not only neglecting their work to indulge themselves in the pleasures of fiction, but were having aspirations implanted in their giddy heads, wholly out of keeping with their real stations in life. Reading of masquerades and fainting fits, of midnight trysts and elopements, of the likelihood of being a mysteriously displaced aristocrat - reading, in short, of all those things so often targeted by parodists and the enemies of fiction alike, could only militate against good order, it was said, by encouraging an equality of ambition and even of behaviour. Every novel-reading Miss, each one of the proverbial milliner's apprentices, every Catharine Morland, felt themselves, we are confidently assured in the assaults on the novel, a creature of sensibility, the epitome of the *Ton*, an aristocrat, and would therefore think it only proper to behave in accordance with what they imagined to be their real station in life, not that in which fortune had temporarily hidden them.

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<sup>1</sup> A fairly typical expression of this sort of deduction might be Charles Herbert Huffman's assertion, made in 1920 but not by any means an opinion consigned to the dust-bin of literary criticism, that 'When artists like Richardson, Fielding, Sterne and Goldsmith made common men leading characters in their novels, they were unconsciously advancing the theory of equality, and were teaching the masses, and their social superiors likewise, that all men of whatever rank in society had a full right to representation in the pages of fiction.' *The Eighteenth-Century Novel in Theory and Practice* [Dayton, Virginia, 1920], p.114.

Of course, such criticisms of the novel as these had been vociferously current for several decades before the French Revolution induced a new sense of crisis in Britain. So also had been the primacy in conservative political and social thought of the concept of a Providentially-ordained inequality in society, and the necessity for every member of society to submit to it, a dictum succinctly outlined by Edward Tatham in my epigraph.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, and as was so often the case, anti-Jacobinism in the 1790s and 1800s took up both arguments with increased vigour, restating the fundamental importance of hierarchy passively accepted to the well-being of the commonwealth, and pointing to novels as one of the chief threats to this necessary submission. As I have already suggested, it was partly as a result of this reinvigorated condemnation of the novel that the anti-Jacobin novel came into existence, many of its authors determined to reclaim the genre for what they considered to be a righteous purpose - the attack on Jacobinism in all its forms. It was only natural, therefore, that these novelists should take particular care to demonstrate their conviction of, and commitment to, the sort of hierarchical society, with each member of the community occupying an unalterably defined position within it, that the novel had been accused of undermining. It is these constant endorsements of inequality, of unalterable rank, and of submission, that will be explored in this chapter.

### *1 The great chain of being and the reciprocity of ranks*

The centrality of the social and political theory of hierarchy and inequality to the conservative paradigm would be difficult to overestimate, but this is not to say that every advocate of this kind of social organisation attempted to prove its rectitude with the same arguments. Without in the least falling short of a standard degree of vehemence with which these opinions were upheld, there were writers who variously contended that society's division into separate ranks was divinely ordained, that it was a state of affairs that could be proved merely by means of theory and reason, or that this configuration of society could be endorsed simply on practical grounds alone. This heterogeneous array of arguments, all tending to one conclusion, has recently been authoritatively analysed, in both their elevated and popular manifestations, by Robert Hole and H. T. Dickinson, but there remains a danger in unquestioningly accepting contemporary assertions of this theory of separate spheres of activity for separate sections of society.<sup>3</sup> Just as historians have recently begun to question whether separate *gender* spheres were a reality for most, or even for many, women and men in Britain during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, or whether these concepts were merely a rhetorical construction imposed by writers and speakers whose opinions

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Tatham, *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke on Politics* [Oxford, 1791], p.40.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832* [Cambridge, 1989], especially pp.95-144; H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property. Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* [London, 1977], pp.270-318, and *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* [Basingstoke, 1995], pp.264-70.

generally went unheeded, so the same sceptical scrutiny might profitably be adopted when considering the rhetoric of social hierarchies.<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps not the place to undertake such a complex task, yet two related points are worth making. First, we should remember to be at least suspicious of any effect the ideology of hierarchy and inequality actually had on those to whom it was preached. This will become relevant when we see just how stringently and unfeasibly some novelists preached their doctrines of social immobility. And second, even if this ideology was more rhetorical than real, it was certainly disseminated at least as far down a chain of reception as the authors of novels, who faithfully filled their fiction with it, even if it was not unquestioningly absorbed by the readers of these novels. By the mid-'90s, Hole has argued, arguments stressing the inevitability, probity and wisdom of inequality, more than any other aspect of the conservative ideology, 'dominated debate and were a constant theme from establishment pulpits.' Exactly the same was true of novels, save that in fiction, this dominance continued for many years beyond the zenith of the Revolution crisis.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of gender, *hierarchy* is something of a problematic term, for although traces of subordination always remained, the essence of the concept of separate areas of operation for each sex was that however sequestered they were, these spheres were equally valuable and necessary to society as a whole. The novelist Charlotte Palmer's statement of the theory exhibits this slight confusion well, and emphasises that the proponents of the doctrine saw no contradiction in their position. '[F]rom our birth we are but *secondary* objects in creation,' she wrote in 1797, adding 'subordination is the natural sphere in which we were intended to move.' Yet, she went on, this subordinate state did not degrade women, and she concluded that the degradation only came 'when we attempt to step out of that state.'<sup>6</sup> The same contradiction, and the same confident refusal to see it as a problem, is evident in the conservative theory of hierarchy in general. Just as there were distinct planes of operation for the sexes, for instance, so there were for nations also, a fact which could even inveigle a degree of respect for the French out of the xenophobic laureate, Henry James Pye. For him, the populations of each country had a position in a sort of global hierarchy, but each also had their own proper sphere of operations. The French, for instance, were manifestly inferior to the British in many ways, but, as one of Pye's characters grudgingly admits in *The Democrat* (1795), they were a people who, as well as dancing and dressing well, had proved

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<sup>4</sup> The arguments for the existence of separate gender spheres are convincingly set out, for instance, in Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer. Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* [Chicago, 1984], *passim.*, but come under challenge in Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* [1992; rpt. London, 1994], pp.237-82. Also useful are Karl von den Steinen, 'The Discovery of Women in Eighteenth-Century Political Life' and Barbara B. Schnorrenberg, with Jane E. Hunter, 'The Eighteenth-Century Englishwoman', both in *The Women of England. From Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present*, ed. Barbara Kanner [London, 1980], pp.229-58 and 183-228; Mitzi Myers, 'Reform or Ruin: A Revolution in Female Manners' in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 11 (1982), pp.199-216; and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* [London, 1987].

<sup>5</sup> Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.128 and see pp.118-19.

<sup>6</sup> Charlotte Palmer, *Letters upon Several Subjects from a Preceptress to her Pupils who have left School* [London?, 1797], quoted in J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800* [London, 1932], pp.146-47.

themselves brave and scientifically ingenious, but who had found that 'being arbiters of legislation, and setting the fashions of freedom is a little out of their line', the consequence inevitably being that the 'dose of liberty they have taken seems a little too strong for their volatile heads.'<sup>7</sup>

Most obviously, and most pertinently, this conceptual framework applied to British society, which conservative writers constantly showed to be possessed of a hierarchy running up and down it like a backbone, with a pronounced top and bottom, and any number of intervening grades, but with each position being equally essential and, therefore, it being equally dangerous to attempt to step out of any one of them. Each individual in Britain, they insisted, had their own pre-ordained and unalterable position in society, a position in which their own personal characteristics and qualities were submerged in the characteristics and qualities of the particular caste into which they had been born. It was not merely degrading to attempt to escape one's station, but ridiculous, and dangerous. Aristocrats were meant to remain aristocrats and to act like them, farmers were meant to remain farmers, and milliners' apprentices were expected to remain milliners' apprentices, in terms of their aspirations as well as their employment. Just as it was a clear transgression for women to enter the sphere of the public and political and for men to meddle in the running of the household, so clergymen were not meant to be fashionable, and (with particular relevance to the authors of anti-Jacobin fiction) fools were not meant to be philosophers.

To an extent, anti-Jacobin novelists were happy to assume that their readers agreed with them that this concept of a great chain of being which stretched throughout society was divinely, or at least Providentially ordained, and that it was inherently sinful to seek to resist it. Edmund Burke, the great propagandist, if not quite originator, of the conservative social theory that became so influential in the '90s, did much the same in both his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791) in which he set out his ideas most forcefully. Other authors of tracts and sermons on inequality, however, as I have mentioned, did attempt a variety of reasoned vindications of inequality, and these attempts were duly incorporated into novels, often with little or no concession to the different readership that might be expected. It is necessary to be wary, of course, of attributing every apparent fictional recital of some specific piece of conservative dogma to a specific source amongst the welter of anti-Jacobin tracts and treatises. The various strands and arguments of conservative thought in the '90s were general property in most cases, and novelists might have appropriated any position from any number of pamphlets or sermons, or simply have developed the argument for themselves. There are, however, some general similarities to be elicited, similarities which, whilst they can seldom be precise attributions of fictional to non-fictional anti-Jacobinism, do demonstrate the way in which novels shadowed, as it were, the major strands of the conservative ideology of the Revolution crisis.

One thread of late eighteenth century conservative thought, for instance, sought to base inequality on an almost scientific, or at least reasoned, foundation. Robert Hole cites the popular *Reasons*

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<sup>7</sup> Henry James Pye, *The Democrat: Interspersed with Anecdotes of Well Known Characters* [1795; London, 1796]. II, 43.



for *Contentment* (1793) and *Natural Theology* (1802) of the redoubtable William Paley, archdeacon of Carlisle, as examples of this sort of strategy in action, but a more compelling, but similarly rational, argument was put up by Adam Ferguson in his refining of his earlier thought, *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792). Ferguson's arguments on equality were convoluted and diffuse, being comprised of his lectures at Edinburgh, but they may be distilled into two contentions which were representative of the arguments used by a large section of inequality's apologists. His first principle was certainly a classic defence of inequality, arguing that because each individual had a different disposition, some being covetous and frugal, say, and others neglectful and dissipated, and because each individual was of unequal ability and application, there would always be distinctions in the fortunes of mankind, and from a difference of fortune, Ferguson argued, there must always result 'a distinction of estimation and rank'.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, this was a point so central to any defence of inequality that it is unsurprising to find it often reiterated in fiction. It was the line of argument John Moore opted for, for example, in his *Mordaunt* of 1800 when he sought to denigrate the attempt of the Revolutionaries to introduce what they called 'equality' into France. Moore's protagonist might well have been reading Ferguson, although it could have been any one of several other similar works, when he wrote to a correspondent in Britain that what he has seen perfectly shows that 'there can no more be an equality of fortune, than there is of stature, of strength, of understanding, of activity or industry'.<sup>9</sup>

The second element of Ferguson's rationalisation of inequality was a little more abstruse, drawing upon a distinctively Scottish theory of political economy and paying homage to the work of Adam Smith. Not only was inequality and hierarchy natural, Ferguson argued, but it was positively useful too, which is to say that it was profitable both to the individual and the nation since it provided an incentive for ingenuity and industry. To an extent, Ferguson was taking a dangerously radical line here, for he contended that it was partly the ambition of those in the lower orders of society which conduced to this profitability. But he was careful to temper this with more conventional arguments about the necessary aggregation of sums of capital for the furtherance of trade and manufacture, and he seems never to have imagined that the ambition of which he spoke as 'a spur to their industry and an incentive to labour' would actually be successful in raising any individual out of their station relative to their superiors, but would only serve to enrich the nation as a whole. This is apparent from the metaphor with which he attempted to clinch his argument, for he envisaged a nation labouring under the burdens of equality as analogous to a number of individuals all attempting to complete a manufacturing process from start to finish on their own, whilst a society organised into distinct ranks was comparable to an association of individuals gathered to work on the process together, each carrying out a small part of the operation numerous times

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<sup>8</sup> Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science; being chiefly a Retrospect of Lectures delivered in the College of Edinburgh* [Edinburgh, 1792], II, 442-443. Elsewhere, Ferguson is even more concise: 'inequality may be traced to its origin in the unequal dispositions of man to industry and frugality' (II, 371).

<sup>9</sup> John Moore, *Mordaunt, Sketches of Life, Characters and Manners, in Various Countries* [London, 1800], I, 39n.

according to their own particular talent in a manner which resembles a modern production line. There could be no question, he concluded, which method would be more efficient.<sup>10</sup>

Tracing this aspect of Ferguson's thought into fiction is a slightly more difficult task, but, even in as unlikely a place as Clara Reeve's unrepentantly gothic novel *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* (1793), there are unmistakable hints of Ferguson's economically based vindication of inequality. Reeve ends her novel by running down a list of those classes of readers she hoped her message would reach, and what it would teach them. The summit of her ambition is to teach princes to beware evil counsellors, but she has special lessons for every degree of society right down to 'the people at large', whom she wished to teach 'submission to their lawful prince, to the laws, and to the Magistrates', as well as 'to shun all those who would seduce them to worship the idol *Equality*, which, if it could be introduced, would reduce them to indolence and despondency.'<sup>11</sup> This was a fairly standard moral lesson couched in fairly standard moral language, but when we add it to her stated wish to instruct those engaged in arts and trades in the importance of avoiding imitation of luxury and of being honest and frugal, and the lesson she reserved for those in public office, in whom she hoped to inculcate an utter aversion to embezzlement, a more economic defence can be seen to accompany what remained a theory of inequality largely premised on an only vaguely explored concept of Providence. Her concluding remarks emphasise the economic dimension still further. She ends her novel, she says, with the hope that it will have taught

that a true and regular subordination is what makes all order and degrees of men stand in need of each other, and stimulates them to exercise their courage, industry, activity, and every generous quality, that supports a state and government.<sup>12</sup>

There are certainly shades of a Fergusonian apology for inequality here, even if Reeve did not trouble herself to explain exactly how inequality stimulated industry, and even if the economic arguments were simply grafted onto a more traditionally religious explanation. And it was a synthesis to be found issuing from more and more pulpits and presses in the 1790s as the Revolution crisis caused such panic that any and every defence of the existing order was pressed into service, often with no regard for their compatibility. The title alone of Bishop Richard Watson's *The Wisdom and Goodness of God in Having Made Both Rich and Poor*, reissued in 1793, may be considered representative of many of these anti-equality outbursts. Of course, God's will was *wise* and *good*, that went without saying, but if other, more

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<sup>10</sup> Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, II, 371 and 423-24. He concludes that 'we owe, in great measure, to the inequalities of fortune, ... that labour by which articles of consumption are reproduced and the sources of wealth are enlarged' (II, 423).

<sup>11</sup> Clara Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* [London, 1793], III, 228-29.

<sup>12</sup> Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, III, 229-30. Compare Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel* [Plymouth, 1795?]: 'To the difference of Rank and Station, to the Influence of Protection and Patronage do the Arts and Sciences owe their Rise and Perfection. - It comes not within the Scheme of Providence to establish an Equality' (I, 225-26).

utilitarian, proofs could also be adduced as to why inequality was beneficial and expedient, there was no harm in adding those too.<sup>13</sup>

However, some strands of Christian social theology did manage to devise other means by which to justify social inequality without having recourse to these materialist arguments, and again it was a defence that was reproduced in fiction. As Hole has noted, William Wilberforce and a number of other similarly inclined evangelical apologists for the *status quo* added an element of 'moral paternalism' to the usual formulas, arguing that Christianity made inequality less of a burden, but above all, that it rendered any trifling difference of rank entirely inconsequential for the only state of existence that mattered was yet to come.<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton was not an Evangelical in any formal sense, and nor was her novel *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808) an anti-Jacobin novel in the tradition of her own *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* of a decade earlier, being, in some respects, little more than an extended Cheap Repository Tract. Nevertheless, *Glenburnie* attempted to strip the 'doctrine of Liberty and Equality ... of all seditious import', as one of its chapter titles put it, with proofs that only one's rank in the eternal hierarchy of souls was significant. Indeed, Hamilton chose to strip equality of its seditious import by depicting two funerals, occasions that interface between transitory earthly distinctions and the lasting ranks of the afterlife. One is Lord Longland's, a lavish spectacle with herds of plumed horses and troops of hired mourners, none of whom was interested in remembering the supposed object of their lamentations; the other is that of the humble Mrs MacClarty which, though unadorned with such empty trappings of grief, was an occasion for all those who had known the deceased and her virtues to mourn truly. Mrs Mason loses no time in drawing the necessary conclusions:

'Where now,' thought she, 'are the distinctions of rank? Where those barriers, which in this world separate man from man? Even here sorrow only embalms the memory of the righteous. ... Why then should those of lowly station envy the trappings of vanity, they are but the boast of a moment, when, by piety and virtue, they may attain a distinction so much more lasting and glorious?

Real contentment, Hamilton elicits, is to be found only in that peace of mind which 'is distributed by Providence with an equal hand among all the various classes of society.'<sup>15</sup>

Wilberforce and others had even argued that the lowly path in life was a positive advantage, not so much because it pleaded one's cause at the final judgement, but because a simple life put temptation out of one's way. Francis Lathom was one novelist who conscientiously took it upon himself to support this

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<sup>13</sup> For an overview of the Church's defence of hierarchical society see R. A. Soloway, *Prelates and the People. Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852* [London, 1969], pp.55-74. 'In formulating their defense,' Soloway makes clear, 'Church spokesmen did not stress the comparative merits of their religion. They were less concerned about convincing the lower classes of the spiritual beauties of the Anglican faith than they were in reconciling them to the necessary realities of natural social inequality', a point he illustrates with reference to numerous sermons and tracts from authors as diverse as Samuel Parr and Hannah More (p.58).

<sup>14</sup> Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.129.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Cottagers of Glenburnie; A Tale for the Farmer's Ingle-Nook* [Edinburgh, 1808], pp.253 and 48-49.

claim, his otherwise rather blithe *Men and Manners* (1799) including some lengthy passages on the subject. 'The poor man soon finds how little he has to expect in this world,' explains Jacob, a man of vast experience in these matters as his life-story has revealed, 'and his conscience then points out to him the way to expect it in another'. The rich man, on the other hand, 'has so much to think about here, that I should fear he often forgets there is an hereafter!' When he does remember, Jacob asks, who will be the happier, him, or the poor man who can never forget that to which he has to look forward? Lathom actually went so far as to dramatise the effect of such arguments on a poor old woman who had the good fortune to be sitting outside her humble cottage as Jacob and his interlocutor passed by: "'Oh Sir," cried Dame Bridge, 'how comfortable and pleasant it makes me feel to hear you talk; it becomes a gentleman like you, that have had the opportunity of learning, to tell the poor people these things for their comfort'"<sup>16</sup>

That the wealth and power of those in the higher ranks of society could only work to their disadvantage was a strain of anti-equality social theory that did not have to be based on the theological argument of the difficulty a rich man faced getting into heaven. As it became more secular, however, the argument became more unconvincing, the trick of contending that affluence was onerous and privilege a burden becoming increasingly difficult to pull off. Such defences of inequality in the novels could often be breath-taking in their audacity, but also began to look ridiculous. A passage from Charles Lucas' *Castle of St. Donats* (1798), for instance, seems almost a parody of itself as the *ci-devant* Duke de Meritè explains his wish to be known only as Mr Smith from then on:

The poor think the rich are most happy: the rich indeed have the outward appearance of it, and the poor of misery: but look within, - a superb dwelling, fine clothes, and delicate viands are no longer the means of happiness to a great man; custom makes them common, and often loathsome, while discontent, ill health, and the greatest of all evils, idleness, make him far more wretched than the poor fellow, whose simple labour, natural to man, gives him health, spirits, and expels that dreadful lassitude of thought.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, Lucas was treading a dangerous path here, for in claiming that any one rank was somehow better off than any other he was inviting comparisons which could only be dangerous. Much more often it was the endeavour of the anti-Jacobin novelists to demonstrate that each rank in society was an equally good place to be. Thus the aristocratic hero of Brydges' *Arthur Fitz-Albini* (1798), meditating upon a humble ploughman, found the same reasons for him to be cheerful as the Duke de Meritè had identified ('Does not his employment innocently and usefully occupy his time and thoughts? Does he despond beneath the insipidity, is he tormented by the wicked passions, of refined idleness? Does not health brace his nerves; and labour exclude uneasy thoughts?'), but also realised that the ploughman's good fortune in no way affected his own, and that his nobility and the ploughman's vocation should demand the same respect

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<sup>16</sup> Francis Lathom, *Men and Manners. A Novel* [London, 1799], IV, 155-56 and 174.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Lucas, *The Castle of St. Donats; or, the History of Jack Smith* [London, 1798], III, 146.



because they were the exact counterparts of each other, unsustainable if they were forced to stand alone.<sup>18</sup> It was as much a sin for a noble to be envious of another rank of society, in other words, as it was for a peasant or a labourer, though, as could only be expected, it was those towards the bottom of the great chain of being whom novelists seemed most anxious to assure of the iniquity of seeking to alter their appointed station.

Thus, in *Solyman and Fatima; or, the Sceptic Convinced*, an Oriental tale of 1791 by T. Wright, the protagonist is born to be a shepherd, but, ardent for knowledge, wishes, with a degree of quasi-Biblical symbolism, to desert his flock and to leave his native plains of Cassimere. Wright's ruling on his protagonist is severe:

he knew not that ambition prompted the restless wish, nor considered that the sphere of life allotted by Providence to every individual, is productive of pleasures adapted to the capacity, and affords the proper scope for the execution of moral duties.<sup>19</sup>

By contrast, we are shown Zadah, his father, a man who has always been an unassuming shepherd who enjoys the gifts of Providence with thankfulness, 'resigning all to its dispensations with humble adoration', and a man whose days, therefore, have been irradiated by 'one clear beam of social bliss'. He knows that any reasoning 'which would affix the idea of happiness to any particular station of human life' is erroneous, the secret of contentment being that humility 'which, by leading to a just distrust of our own wisdom, impels the mind to rest implicitly in the unerring ordinations of Providence', and the unravelling of the quixote-style plot soon proves him right. In fact, Wright's persistence in teaching this lesson soon becomes rather daunting for he reiterates his point at every opportunity, and, as if his own authority was not enough, closes the novel with a celestial endorsement of the moral Solyman has drawn, a messenger of Allah descending to pronounce that 'the station assigned to each individual is that wherein his happiness is to be found'.<sup>20</sup>

The novel *Solyman and Fatima*, indeed, was an exposition of hierarchical society worthy of Burke himself, but Wright's social theory was nearer to that of some of those who developed Burke's principles. Edward Tatham, for instance, in what was essentially his supplement to Burke's articulation of the pre-ordained, Providential social order, attempted to demonstrate that not only was it going against God's will to disrupt his appointed order, but it would not, and could not, work, and must inevitably lead to misery.<sup>21</sup> This was precisely what *Solyman and Fatima* had attempted to show, for Wright had not simply assumed, as Burke did, that all his readers were convinced of the divine provenance of the social

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<sup>18</sup> Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini, A Novel* [1798; London, 1799], I, 56-57.

<sup>19</sup> T. Wright, *Solyman and Fatima; or, the Sceptic Convinced. An Eastern Tale* [London, 1791], I, 22 and 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Wright, *Solyman and Fatima*, I, 22-23, 56 and II, 87.

<sup>21</sup> See Hole's commentary on Tatham's *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1791), *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.127-28.

order, and nor had he been content to rely on his readers taking his word for the probity of this hierarchical society, but had precisely demonstrated the consequences of such transgression. Solyman's adventures, once he has left his native plains, are all designed meticulously to demonstrate both the dangers of ambition (we follow his fate as he is sold into slavery and then condemned to death because of his unfamiliarity with the ways of the world), and, secondly, the impossibility of being content with the sort of luxury enjoyed by the rich and for which Solyman had originally yearned. When he finds a huge jewel and actually becomes rich, Solyman can live the sort of life he has always dreamt of, but since he is not to the manner born, he quickly becomes indolent and unhappy, and moreover, is unable to run his household, so that it soon descends into disorganisation and becomes a burden rather than a pleasure to him. Needless to say, it is precisely at this point that he 'began at length to conclude, that the wisdom of Providence has proportioned the several stations of mankind to the measure of intellectual capacity,' and that 'the happiness of individuals is properly found in that walk of life which a power infinitely more wise hath allotted.'<sup>22</sup>

The Oriental tale was a form marvellously well adapted to showing the practical arguments that Tatham and others had raised against any attempt at equality. In another, *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day* (1802), the author used a similar technique to Wright's by describing the dystopian dream of his Prince Massouf of a land in which equality had been tried, and had led to bloody anarchy. The message of *Massouf* is clear, and identical to that of *Solyman and Fatima*: each rank in society, from shepherds to princes, has its distinct duties, and it is only in the pursuit of these duties that any contentment can be found. It is a moral that gets pride of place in *Massouf*, the prince's wise counsellor, Ayoub, bringing the novel to a close with an interpretation of his dream, although his oneiromancy must be superfluous to anyone who has read through the dream themselves. 'Proceed, then, Oh Massouf!' he says,

to an unwearied performance of the awful duties of thy station; urge and enforce, as much as is in thy power, the same conduct in others. A community, where each individual is virtuously employed in the duties of his station, has attained the summit of human prosperity.<sup>23</sup>

Actually, there is one final episode to follow this lesson in *Massouf*, for the prince has yet to fulfil his own appointed rôle as hero of a novel by marrying Fetnah, Ayoub's daughter, to whom we were introduced as a likely bride at the very beginning of the novel. When the marriage does take place, Massouf can be said to have reached that 'summit of human prosperity' of which Ayoub had spoken, partly because marriages in novels are conventionally productive of just this kind of absolute felicity, and partly because, as a novel's hero, he has now duly performed the duties of his station.

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<sup>22</sup> Wright, *Solyman and Fatima*, II, 14-15.

<sup>23</sup> Anon., *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day. An Eastern Tale* [London, 1802], p.209.

The elision of a hero's fulfilment of his literary duty (to get married) and his social duty, which in Massouf's case was to rule wisely and benignly, was a technique perfectly suited to novels, and one that was hardly an option for the authors of sermons and tracts. If, though, it was rather an oblique way of making the point, probably too subtle for effective propaganda, there were other techniques similarly well adapted for fiction which novelists were quick to take up. They present their readers with vast numbers of happy servants and labourers, for example, men and women who would not wish to change their social position for anything in the world even though they derive from what we might have considered, before we had learned the doctrine of propriety of rank, the lowest classes of society. Generous masters and mistresses that they are, French aristocrats forced to emigrate from their native land in novels such as *Adolphus de Biron* and *The Parisian* generally offer their servants the chance to remain under the Revolutionary regime that will grant them their freedom. The offers are always indignantly refused.<sup>24</sup> Those who are forced to stay in France lament the loss of the aristocrats: 'Folks may say what they will', says one wretched woman when the local *grande*s are forced to flee from the approaching Revolutionary army, 'but I am sure that one such good house as our castle above was, is a thousand times better for the poor than all these new notions that have brought us no good yet.'<sup>25</sup>

Even if this was fiction, it was tangible *proof* of the wisdom of hierarchical society, not the mere speculation (however confident) that necessarily emanated from the pulpit and filled the disquisition. When it came from the mouths of the poor and needy, as a novelist could easily contrive it to do, the theoretical economic justification of inequality gathered authority, as Massouf discovered when, still dallying with the youthful ambition to put the world to rights, he asked an indigent bag-maker whether he was not jealous of one of the nation's principle merchants and all his opulence. 'By no means,' says the man, displaying an admirable grasp of political economy,

such immense and prodigious capitals as his are necessary to give energy to trade, which without them would stagnate, and in a country so populous as our's, thousands, who, like myself, owe their bread to it, must starve: besides, I am not poor; thanks to the flourishing state of commerce, wages are high, and few men need be poor in town. Poverty will, it is true, in some degree always exist: it is often the consequence of natural infirmity, of sickness, of unavoidable calamity; but oftener of indolence and profligacy.<sup>26</sup>

The bag-maker's communitarian theory, just like that of Ferguson or Tatham, rested upon the idea of a pyramidal society uncompromisingly divided horizontally into distinct ranks but with vertical connections cutting across the strata so strong that, although they did not infract on the sacred configuration of classes,

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, II, 129-34; Mary Charlton, *The Parisian; or, Genuine Anecdotes of Distinguished and Noble Characters* [London, 1794], II, 192.

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Banished Man* [London, 1794], I, 150.

<sup>26</sup> Anon., *Massouf*, pp.100-101.

they did bind together those ranks in a web of mutually beneficial relations. Everyone, in every station in life, benefited from a rigidly hierarchical society, not just compared with its notional opposite, the sort of equal society which could only lead to anarchy, but in absolute terms too. For Richard Dallas, in his *Percival, or Nature Vindicated* (1801), it was something best expressed with a pleasant metaphor. Equality, one of his characters equates with 'the level of the ocean which is at the mercy of the winds, whereas', she goes on, 'the distinction of ranks is the firm earth of which the acclivities and declivities, the hills and the valleys, ensure the verdure, fertility, and beauty.'<sup>27</sup> It was a fertility that would conduce to the benefit of all, a sort of mutually-beneficial bargain struck between the various ranks of society, in which each rank recognised that it had its own specific and separate duties, all tending towards one goal, like cogs in a machine.

Of course, the principal duty of the lower orders of society could be fulfilled simply by their submission to the hierarchy, something perfectly dramatised in Mary Meeke's *Count St. Blancard* (1795) in which the plot somehow places a provincial woman of little status and few parts in the way of the true Count inheriting his usurped fortune and title. Since the Count has always proved himself the perfect aristocrat-in-waiting, donating alms right, left and centre (and even to this woman), whilst she knows that she has none of these qualities, it is only natural that she should abdicate in his favour. Nevertheless, it still seems rather blatant that Meeke has her defer to the Count by signing a blank piece of paper on which he may write out whatever settlement he thinks fit, awarding himself the title, and his kinswoman some small recompense for her obedience to Providence, but certainly not enough to elevate her out of her station in life.<sup>28</sup> Especially in novels, though, members of what we may still be certain are the lower orders would often play a more active rôle, dramatising, as it were, their loyal submission. Trusty servants are always to be found getting their social superiors out of danger, for example, as in *Adolphus de Biron*, in which Miss MacIntosh has no sooner fallen from her horse than the faithful old sea-dog, Archie, has saved her from serious injury. Captain M.'s extempore meditation of 'the necessity of Order both on sea and shore' is deemed so edifying by Mr Bruce as to deserve full transcription in his letter to Adolphus:

Protection claims our Gratitude, and many other Effects which cannot come within the Scheme of Equality. - I regard Archie for his honest and good Disposition, and he is sensible of my good Offices and Protection. The Wise Disposer of all Things has assigned to every one his Station and the Whole Chain of Beings are dependant on each other.<sup>29</sup>

Just in case any readers had unaccountably persisted in missing the point that the existing hierarchies were responsible for all the beauties and benefits of British society and were reciprocally beneficial to all

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<sup>27</sup> R. C. Dallas, *Percival, or Nature Vindicated. A Novel* [London, 1801], II, 29. The 'nature' of Dallas' title that was being 'vindicated', of course, was the unequal state of society innate in mankind since the Fall.

<sup>28</sup> Mary Meeke, *Count St. Blancard; or, the Prejudiced Judge, A Novel* [London, 1795], III, 81.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, I, 155.



groups of society, Thomas has one of her characters, the worthy Mr Stanley, trot out the familiar tale of the 'Schism in the Body Natural'. He argues that 'this beautiful Fable', in which the body's limbs refuse to pander to the desires of the belly, and are surprised to find themselves languishing as well, 'is perhaps a better Answer to Mr Paine's Rights of Man, than a laboured Confutation'.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, why hazard a laboured confutation, why encourage any sense of debate at all, when the novel was such a well-adapted medium for exhibiting the reciprocal benefits of ranked society in a manner that would brook no dissension? Who could argue, for instance, with *The Brothers*, a 'Novel for Children' of 1794, in which we follow the education of Henry, the son of a prosperous gentry family, taught all the duties of his station, and Tom Jenkins, a 'peasant' instructed at the local Sunday school to serve and obey? Both of them precocious, Henry and Tom anticipate the rôles they, as master and servant, will play in later life. Henry donates his old clothes to Tom, whilst Tom, always anxious for Henry's well-being, rescues him from a potentially disastrous bird-nesting accident.<sup>31</sup>

But the conception of a mutually-beneficial bargain inherent in civil society was most obvious when novelists sought to stress the economic justifications for inequality, their desultory attempts at political economy really acting not so much as reasoned arguments designed to convert, but as a large scale metaphor for the necessity of hierarchy. In George Walker's *Vagabond* (1799), for instance, the point was proved with the help of a pineapple. Only the rich can afford to buy such a luxury, complains the would-be new philosopher, Frederick, and while they spend a guinea on it, the poor starve for want of a half-penny's worth of bread. Fortunately, there is a man of sense on hand to expose this fallacy. Were it not for the rich to buy each pineapple, he explains, shares of the guinea with which they are bought would not descend to the many people who thus derive their livelihood. Would Frederick want the fruiterer, the gardener, the glazier, all to starve, not to mention all those others who produce the materials for these trades? And, he must surely realise, it was obvious that only this kind of integrated and inter-reliant society could produce an exotic fruit like a pineapple, and, by extension, anything of any value.<sup>32</sup> Manifestly, it was actually the duty of the rich to indulge themselves. Indeed, an upright servant in Sarah Green's *The Reformist!!!* (1810) calls it 'no better *nor* a downright sin' that his new philosophising master wishes to walk to London and to sleep under hedgerows on the way, even though he says that he reserves his purse for the indigent, for it deprives all those inn-keepers and coach-drivers who ought to have

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, II, 70. Clara Reeve had employed the same parable in her *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, one of her fourteenth century knights taking time off from fighting the battles of the Black Prince to remind the French that 'in a well-regulated state, there is a just and beautiful subordination, in which all the different degrees are aiding and assisting each other, and none are independent of the state. As in the natural body, the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you; So, in a well-governed state, each member has need of the others, and all are governed by one head, for the good of the whole body' (III, 9).

<sup>31</sup> Anon., *The Brothers; A Novel, for Children. Addressed to Every Good Mother* [Henley, 1794], chs.1-4.

<sup>32</sup> George Walker, *The Vagabond, a novel* [London, 1799], I, 210-12.

benefited from his spending.<sup>33</sup> It is a sign of how far this trickle-down principle had been absorbed into the fabric of the novel that it could even displace that most conventional duty of the rich, charity. The fortune that accrues to Edward, a central character in Dallas' *Percival*, he proposes to manage with thrift so that he will have all the more to give away to the deserving poor. Luckily, the wise Mr Bevil is there to correct him by pointing out this is not the approved way of managing a fortune, it being the duty of 'men of fortune' to support *commerce* by spending their wealth, for 'every man who spent his income added to the general welfare'.<sup>34</sup>

The principal duty of the *élite*, however, always remained the disbursement of charity. Of course, an aristocrat's duties were not limited to this and, indeed, novelists seemed rather keen to demonstrate that in certain respects there was a distinctly onerous side to being at the head of the social scale. In fiction, aristocratic heroes and heroines were often to be found lamenting that their status imposed more limitations than freedoms, a socio-political comment generally mediated through the refusal of their proud parents, representing the strictly, but necessarily, ordered society, to sanction their union with the partner of their choice who came from, or seemed to come from, a lower social class. More than one hero found, like Henry Villiers in *Plain Sense* (1796), who even wished to pass on his title to his brother so that he might marry the indigent Ellen, that 'his detested title, like Dejenira's fatal gift, stuck close and filled him with torment and despair'.<sup>35</sup> But the fact that, as in all the most popular novels of the '90s - Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1794), say, or Regina Maria Roche's *Children of the Abbey* (1796) - it was a problem that could be quickly resolved by revelations of true pedigrees and bequests of large fortunes, merely emphasised the error of attempting to abdicate one's social responsibilities, as Henry had wanted to do, or, worse, of violating its edicts, by an elopement perhaps. In novels, both those of high and low estate had to wait patiently for the workings of the plot to secure their felicity, the rich and powerful having to submit to the dictates of their rank just as did the poor. Indeed, it was often pointed out that the *élite* could learn a thing or two about submission from their social inferiors: 'look at the lower ranks of people, who earn with difficulty a scanty meal with hard labour', says the pious Mrs Allwyne to the hero of Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* (1798), '- they are cheerful, and perhaps thankful - and will you, in the enjoyment of plenty and many accommodations, give way to a restless and dissatisfied mind...?'<sup>36</sup> At least one aristocrat, Lord Bendham in Meeke's *Conscience* (1814), took her advice and submitted to the rules of his class. Unhappy in his station, he drew solace from his duty, just as so many

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<sup>33</sup> 'Here's many an honest innkeeper on the road, with a large family to support, and not knowing how, as a body may say, to make both ends meet, that you, with your large fortune, might do abundance of good to, by stopping at his house, and dining or supping.' Sarah G\*\*\*\*, *The Reformist!!! A Serio-comic Political Novel* [London, 1810], I, 20-21.

<sup>34</sup> Dallas, *Percival*, I, 260.

<sup>35</sup> Alethea Lewis, *Plain Sense. A Novel* [London, 1796], I, 119.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver* [Bristol, 1798], II, 157.

faithful servants had done: 'we must console ourselves,' he says, 'by the cheerful enjoyment of those blessings within our reach, *and* by dispensing our superfluities among those who are less amply provided with the goods of this world.'<sup>37</sup>

Stressing that rank could be onerous, equating the different but similarly demanding lots of the rich and the poor, the powerful and the submissive, novelists were stressing the social bargain in which each rank had their prescribed duty which contributed to the welfare of the whole. Charity, the chief duty of the élite, obviously illustrated this well, for it benefited society in material terms that were actually fairly demonstrable, or at least easily imaginable. An active philanthropy was the novelist's shorthand for virtue, for sensibility, and thus for fitness to be a hero or heroine. If an author wished to urge a protagonist or a reader to favour a particular character, then it would be done by showing that character in the act of dispensing alms to the needy. But charity also became the symbol of all that justified rank and held society together, the chief duty of the rich and powerful and the principal vindication of their elevated status. Just as we recognise good individual aristocrats by their philanthropy, so we recognise the virtues of the institution of aristocracy by the same sign. True patricians were proud of their rank only because of their consequent usefulness to society, as, to take one example, was Sir William Powerscourt in Jane West's *Tale of the Times* (1799):

His strong attachment to the seat of his ancestors was more the result of generous philanthropy than any lucrative consideration. ... as he rode around his estate, his feelings resembled those of a conscientious guardian rather than of a self-accountable owner, and the land-lord and master were in his beneficent bosom ever sunk in the milder qualities of the protector and friend.<sup>38</sup>

Such benevolence was the only reason to value nobility, genuine aristocrats knew. They would not care if they were somehow deprived of their rank, as seemed to happen all too often in novels (whether on account of either levellers or the machinations of the wicked step-mothers which had more traditionally filled fiction), save that, as Arthur Fitz-Albini put it, 'I cannot bear that the hereditary hospitality of this place, so useful to a poor and numerous neighbourhood, should end in me!'<sup>39</sup> What Fitz-Albini obviously did not realise was that even if he did end up being stripped of his rightful wealth, as his father's dissipation was constantly threatening, any rightful aristocrat who was somehow usurped in a novel could, and always would, exhibit their nobility in whatever circumstances they found themselves, gathering about themselves a 'solitary pensioner' or two, and perhaps 'a little humble circle' to whom they might

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<sup>37</sup> Mary Meeke, *Conscience. A Novel* [London, 1814], quoted in John Garrett's introduction to Meeke's *Count St Blancard* [1795; New York, 1977], I, xxiii.

<sup>38</sup> Jane West, *A Tale of the Times* [London, 1799], I, 27-28.

<sup>39</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, I, 11.

render a thousand kind offices however poor they were themselves - as was the plan adopted by Althea Dacre in Smith's *Marchmont* (1796).<sup>40</sup>

If, though, charity represented the primary duty of the élite, their part in the grand social bargain, it was not as unproblematic a function as might be thought. As we have already seen, they had a duty not to be recklessly munificent, being required conspicuously to consume the luxuries that would indirectly conduce to the benefit of all, to eat their fair share of pineapples as it were. Secondly, they had a responsibility to ensure that, in the joy of their benevolence, they did not disrupt society's hierarchies by propelling any individual out of his or her allotted station with inappropriate beneficence. Eliza Parsons was one to warn of exactly this danger. 'To assist the unfortunate in the line they have been accustomed to, and procure them comforts in the sphere Providence has placed them, is the most essential mode to procure ease and happiness', she said, but this was to be contrasted with the sort of improper benevolence which simply lavished money on those thought deserving, 'for we may observe, in a thousand instances, that, when interest or fortunate occurrences raise a man beyond what birth and education fitted him for, he is, generally speaking, awkward and unhappy in himself, envied and ridiculed by his equals, and despised by his superiors'.<sup>41</sup> Edward Percival, eponymous hero of Robert Dallas' novel, had made just this mistake, rewarding the industrious and honest shoe-maker who had handed back his lost pocket-book with the £20 note that it still contained. This was utter folly, for such wealth was dangerous to the shoe-maker, who proceeded to spend his 'God-send' on drink, nearly destroying his family by his extended intoxication - something his modest profits had never allowed before.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, this parable forms part of a protracted discussion of the duties and dangers of charity, a 'congress of benevolence' as one character calls the collected debates Dallas depicts when Edward suddenly inherits a fortune. The congress attempted to resolve some of the finer problems of philanthropy's propriety, quantifying, for the benefit of any reader who has just inherited £12,000 per annum perhaps, the right way to spend a fortune (answer: retain £4000 for living expenses, £2000 to cover any unexpected outlay, put £2000 in bonds, so that good dowries can accumulate, and set aside the other £4000 for 'making others happy').<sup>43</sup> Such considerations in his fiction make it obvious that Dallas' didacticism was aimed not so much at any would-be levellers amongst his readers, as at those who were in possession of rank, wealth and power, and who, in his opinion, were in danger of misusing them. This is why so much of the debate in *Percival* is taken up with the attempt to educate the élite in the right and the wrong ways to distribute charity, and why also Dallas took pains to admit that for every good and

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<sup>40</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont: A Novel* [London, 1796], II, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Eliza Parsons, *Women As They Are. A Novel* [London, 1796], III, 84-85.

<sup>42</sup> Dallas, *Percival*, I, 239-42.

<sup>43</sup> Dallas, *Percival*, I, 231.



benevolent aristocrat, there were many who, lamentably, were as corrupt as his heroes were upright. 'Hereditary fortune ... is a blessed instrument', says one of the debaters at the 'congress', but, he admitted, might equally well be a curse if neglected, or worse, wrongly used. 'Men who are born to fortune are appointed by Providence to the administration of a certain portion of the interests of the world', Dallas insisted, but added that they were the 'helmsmen of happiness' and if they deserted the wheel, anarchy could be the only result.<sup>44</sup> Such an argument, endorsing the idea of corrupt authority, was not needed to dissuade potential levellers, nor to counter any perceived Jacobin threat, but rather would tend to support their cause. But it was nevertheless a central part of the anti-Jacobin campaign in fiction. Novelists sought to demonstrate that it was just as dangerous for the élite to neglect, or repudiate, their duty, as it was for the lower orders of society to eschew theirs; that, in fact, any challenge to the current social order, from wheresoever it came, would be equally disastrous. Levelling and ambition, and corruption and indolence, were all tantamount to the same thing - a challenge to the rightful structures of society that could only end in the destruction of society and the triumph of anarchy on the scale of which France had just witnessed. It is these three separate, but analogous, dangers - of levellers, of ambition, and, in the next chapter, of the corrupt aristocracy - that I shall be exploring in the following sections.

## 2 *Levellers*

The anti-Jacobin fiction of the 1790s and early 1800s presented the prevailing hierarchical social order, so central to the conservative ideology, as being under attack from three different directions at once. If, however, each of these menaces threatened a revolution in the structure of society, and a revolution that could only be productive of the most catastrophic breakdown of all peace and order, only one of them was directly 'Jacobin' in its inspiration, its origins (supposedly) to be found in the recent Revolution in France.

And even this, the fear of levelling, whether political, social or economic, was not wholly the product of the French Revolution and the radicalism that accompanied it in Britain; the concept of the forced equalisation of rights, ranks and property having been a bugbear of all those who supported the *status quo* for many generations past. The other two elements of this tripartite assault, although they more obviously both pre- and post-dated the Revolutionary years, were nevertheless both fully absorbed into anti-Jacobinism's broad agenda, the dangers which they had previously posed being enormously exacerbated by the sense of crisis that pervaded Britain in the years bracketing 1800. Indeed, anti-Jacobin fiction came to be probably more dominated by the attack on those who sought to raise themselves in the social hierarchy, to elevate themselves out of their proper station, and, second, on those who failed to fulfil the prescribed duties of their station, especially those members of the élite who were negligent of their

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<sup>44</sup> Dallas, *Percival*, I, 228 and 238.

responsibilities, than on the out-and-out levellers with whose menace anti-Jacobinism superficially seemed to be most preoccupied. When each of these three elements of the putative attack on British society has been examined, it should become more obvious how it was that each of them came to be absorbed into the intricate matrix of Jacobinism that so haunted British social and political thought and writing in the decade or so either side of 1800.

This tripartite division of the challenge to the proper order was organised, to a certain extent, around the various classes of society and their different rôles and responsibilities. So, just as anti-Jacobin novelists would concentrate their fire on those members of society's élite who failed to fulfil the duties that constituted their side of the social bargain, and just as they would find themselves attacking primarily members of the middle ranks of society for wanting to raise themselves in society's hierarchies, they came to envisage levellers and levelling ideology as basically emanating from the lowest reaches of society. This was only natural, of course, for it stood to reason that those at the bottom of the social, political and economic pile had most to gain from any equalisation. But this specific targeting also reveals much about the conception of levelling adopted by the anti-Jacobins, or at least the anti-Jacobin novelists. That those at the bottom of the pile, as well as having most to gain from equalisation, also had least to lose was a point made explicitly as well as implicitly by novelists, and it is this that betrays the anti-Jacobin idea of levelling to be one that had never conceded the merest possibility of it ever working, nor ever envisaged it as a legitimate political or social theory, worthy of serious consideration. Levelling was merely the last resort of the desperate, who had nothing left to lose in the upheaval, and thus was self-evidently an evil. So, for instance, in Mary Anne Burges' topographically allegorical *Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent, in Jacobinical Times* (1800), the descent into the 'valley of Equality' was such a dangerous path that any who ventured it had to disencumber themselves of all their possessions, throwing off provisions, money, robes and crowns alike, only to see them picked up by others, usually the 'BLOOD-MEN', for whom Burges means us to understand the cunning Jacobins who had led their unsuspecting adherents into the valley in the first place.<sup>45</sup> Levelling meant disorder, in the literal sense of an disruption of the proper order, as Clara Reeve made plain in the preface to her *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* in 1793. 'The new philosophy of the present day avows a levelling principle,' she told her readers, which meant, she precisely explained, that it 'declares that a state of anarchy is more beautiful than that of order and regularity' - a manifest absurdity.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the author of *The History of Sir George Warrington* (1797) peremptorily concluded that 'a state of equality is a state of envy, anarchy, and confusion', a statement that brooked no debate, nor, most authors apparently thought, needed one.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Mary Anne Burges, *The Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent, in Jacobinical Times* [London, 1800], pp.142-44.

<sup>46</sup> Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, I, xvi-xvii.

<sup>47</sup> Anon., *The History of Sir George Warrington; or the Political Quixote* [London, 1797], I, 188.

But this fairly crude and assumed dismissal of levelling was not a strategy that was particularly well suited to novels, or rather it was not one that enabled anti-Jacobin fiction to reach its full potential. Certainly Reeve seemed to recognise this. As well as founding her attack on levelling on the premise that it was intrinsically iniquitous, she stated quite explicitly how she would impart this lesson. On the one hand, she said, her aim in *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* was 'to give a faithful picture of a well-governed kingdom, wherein a true subordination of ranks and degrees was observed,' since, she added, 'there is nothing more likely to convince mankind of the errors of these men' - the levellers - 'than to set before them examples of good government'. Additionally, though, she told her readers that she would also seek to display the 'mischievous consequences of their own principles', that is to say the results of levelling.<sup>48</sup> This would prove to be a much more common, and effective, tactic for novelists, for as writers of fiction, they were in the unique position of being able to 'prove' the errors of levelling by exhibiting their consequences. In order to pursue this approach, however, novelists were obliged to confront the fact that levelling was a term that, though it had an immense emotional resonance and manifold connotations, had no precise definition, nor many, if any, genuine proponents. 'There were no levellers', Robert Hole has concluded - a statement with which it would be impossible to disagree, save in the cases of a very few individuals.<sup>49</sup> And although it will not be necessary to spend long in exposing the fact that the concept of equality which the anti-Jacobins attacked was largely a creature of their own fabrication, yet because it was a process in which novelists played a significant part, adding flesh, as it were, to the monster that anti-Jacobinism as a whole had manufactured, it does require some further consideration before their methods come under closer analysis.

Any levelling that did exist in 1790s Britain was comprised almost entirely of a belief in an equality of men based on the grounds of religion or natural rights. Very few radicals, and certainly not influential figures such as Price, Priestley or Paine, were prepared to go any further than the demands for political reform that the previous generation of radicals had made. Indeed, the major theoretical innovation of the Revolutionary decade was probably the conception of an equality of generations, as postulated by Paine and attacked by Burke, so that each man had as much right to be free as his forebears, but this was hardly levelling, for not only was it highly theoretical, but it refrained even from contrasting the material condition of one current inhabitant of the planet with another. Not only is this a point made evident by the limits of radical demands in the '90s, but, as has been noted in modern analyses of the rhetoric of political ideology, many radicals themselves were extremely anxious to acknowledge the distinctly limited aims of their own manifestos.<sup>50</sup> Anti-Jacobins, though, were careful not to let petty

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<sup>48</sup> Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, I, xvii and xvi.

<sup>49</sup> Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.119. Thomas Spence might be a candidate, but even he 'did not advocate complete economic equality': H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *The Political Works of Thomas Spence* [Newcastle upon Tyne, 1982], p.xiii.

<sup>50</sup> Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*, pp.240-58.

objections like these very clear statements of moderation interfere with their campaign to smear radicalism by inventing a radical agenda, and then accusing it of the very worst crimes they could imagine. Particularly active in this endeavour were the novelists, and their genius was to use the freedom that their fictional form gave them to portray radicals in exactly those lights which the radicals were most anxious, and for good reason, to avoid.

When in 1795, for example, the London Corresponding Society insisted that whatever ideas of equality it had ever dabbled with, it had never included the levelling of property amongst them, and that until the insinuations 'of alarmists broached the frantic notion,' they could never 'have conceived that so wild and detestable a sentiment could have entered the brain of man', it was a complaint that might have been sufficiently justified if levelled solely at novelists.<sup>51</sup> As distinguished an author as the Poet Laureate had produced in the same year as this protest (and at the Minerva Press, the most popular publishing house in the country) a novel depicting the career of a vaurien, the eponymous *Democrat*, who was perpetually intent on furthering the levelling cause in Britain and was himself 'particularly attentive to the equalization of property'.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, the author of *Dorothea* (1801) chose to delineate the radicals who filled her narrative as being men 'who having neither name, fortune, or principle to lose, were willing to take the chance of a scene of confusion; in the belief, that where property is exposed to the scramble, the most agile will be the greatest gainers'.<sup>53</sup> This same strategy of inventing levelling in exactly those terms that would be most terrifying to the majority of society, regardless of whether or not their fabrication afforded a genuine reflection of the radical programme, is also sometimes apparent in novelists' attempts to exhibit the putative levelling of all distinctions between the sexes. Excepting Wollstonecraft and her circle, and perhaps one or two other idiosyncratic individuals, very few if any radicals were demanding rights for women in the 1790s, and certainly not that women 'exert the divine privilege of resistance, and throw off the shackles of domination', as Dr Alogos, in Walker's *Vagabond*, demanded of his daughter. His daughter's righteous indignation and persistence in thinking 'that the very difference of sexes should teach us that they are designed for different pursuits' argues forcefully against Alogos' folly, but the smear that has already been successful is far more effective, with levelling tarred as a system which would hit Britain with the double horror of gender, as well as economic, equality.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *To the Parliament and People of Great Britain* [London, 1795], quoted in Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*, p.255.

<sup>52</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, I, 3-4, 10-12 and passim. The fact that Pye's Le Noir, on his tour of Britain, discovered that any 'persons possessing even a moderate share of property,... however fond they might be of theoretical equality, ... were not fond of hazarding any step towards the practical part' further emphasises the gap between the accusations levelled at radicalism and its reality (II, 159).

<sup>53</sup> Anon., *Dorothea; or, A Ray of the New Light* [London, 1801], II, 134.

<sup>54</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 10. Anti-feminism, as must have become evident from much of my treatment of conservative novels, formed a substantial part of fiction's anti-Jacobinism, and was undoubtedly treated with a frequency and depth of feeling that was considerably out of proportion to the degree of feminism actually present in late eighteenth century radicalism. See Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*, pp.251-54, and *Politics of the People*, pp.184-85, for discussions of the very limited extent to which any deliberation on, let alone demand for, rights for women featured on the radical agenda.



Even when novelists did turn their attention to political radicalism, the one area in which they could justly have accused British Jacobins of seeking some degree of equalisation, their chief tactic was to show such reform to be no more than political levelling, that is to say, to present the aims of radicalism in the most frightening possible manner. Constitutional reform, according to the anti-Jacobin novels, did not mean the elevation of each adult man to the dignity of enfranchisement, but the diminution of those who already, and rightly, possessed political power to the level of the rest. It meant also the inevitable ruin of the nation as a result of men not qualified to govern taking over the reins of power. Certainly Henry James Pye was unequivocal about the consequences of allowing the lower orders of society to play a political rôle. His Lord Montgomery, the eponymous *Aristocrat*, told us what to expect, for he knew 'both from reason and experience' that 'government cannot be well administered by ignorance and indigence', which is what political reform must inevitably mean, and therefore 'he detested democracy'. By contrast, he was 'strictly an *Aristocrat*', by which Pye meant us to understand that 'he was taking aristocracy in its true sense, of power in the hands of the wealthy, the noble, and above all the virtuous,' all of which qualities would be exiled from government if, heaven forbid, political power was extended even wider than it was at present.<sup>55</sup>

Such an extension had been tried in France, of course, and the consequences were there for all to see, although this did not stop a Frenchman in *The Medallion*, a novel of 1794, from descanting on what a reviewer identified as the theme of 'universal equality', his speech confuting political radicalism with social, and even economic levelling so that, cleverly on the part of the author, the one appeared the natural corollary of the others. The Frenchman advocates 'a constitution on a much more sublime plan' than that currently enjoyed by Britain, and he projects, he tells us,

a plan wherein human nature is invited to work its own perfection; a system that disdains to be set in motion by any particular rank of men; a system by which the peer is levelled with the shepherd, and the servant seated on the bench with his master; a scheme which strips off the distinctions invented by pride and supported by tyranny....<sup>56</sup>

What is immediately evident is that the Frenchman was demanding constitutional reform purely because it would level society, and it is for this same reason that the upright Britons who hear him oppose the plan. The social divisions of society are what form the basis for good government, they say, do away with one and you do away with the other. 'I don't see any reason why,' says one, 'a baker, for instance, who has been up to the elbows in dough all his life-time, should make bold to open the state-oven, and pop his impudent fingers into every pie, and lick, and smack, and spit, and turn up his nose at everything that does

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<sup>55</sup> Henry James Pye, *The Aristocrat. A Novel* [London, 1799], II, 193.

<sup>56</sup> S. Pearson, *The Medallion* [London, 1794], quoted in *The Critical Review*, n.s., 12 (1794), 99 and 100-101.

not suit his taste. Indeed, I don't think he has any business there at all.' No-one, he continues, can be in the cellar and the garret at the same time, and the baker,

with no other knowledge that what he has picked up at his kneading trough, looks just as silly as a nobleman would do, who should tuck up his shirt-sleeves, pin a white apron before him, and flourish his dredging box. Because why? the nobleman knows no more than a sucking child of the baking-business, that the baker is just as wise in state-affairs.<sup>57</sup>

To institute political reform, however mild, we find, is tantamount to levelling society, putting the baker and the aristocrat on a level. In the process both figures would lose the purpose of their ranks and fail in their duties. There would be no good government and no bread. The result could only be the collapse of that harmonious and fruitful society that Britain was so fortunate to enjoy in the late eighteenth century.

Most novelists, however, eschewed this reasoned and hypothetical, though not unhysterical, attack on levelling, preferring to dramatise its effects in their fiction, the plan which, after all, was best adapted for their medium. A fine example is to be found in Helen Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800), in which a maid, Jacqueline, attends a ball dressed as Adelaide, her mistress, for, as she later explains, she imagined that her master, the Jacobin De la Ville, 'would not be displeased at the fancy, since it was agreeable to the system of equality he is continually expatiating on to all around him'.<sup>58</sup> Of course, her master is displeased, exhibiting just the sort of hypocrisy we have come to expect from all Jacobins, but he was especially irritated because Jacqueline's imposture is discovered only when she is set upon by the band of brigands whom he had engaged to abduct his wife (for the variety of reasons that Jacobins often have), and who understandably have mistaken Jacqueline for her mistress. Jacqueline's frightened response to the episode is clearly meant to be edifying. The Jacobinical brigands sneered at her protestations of innocence, she reports, and 'the jargon they talked about equality, will make me hate the word, I am sure, as long as I live, and has cured me of every wish for putting myself on a footing with my superiors in fortune.' Even a Girondin like Charlotte Cordet could draw the obvious moral, and she tells Jacqueline 'to reflect on the folly and danger of stepping aside from the path Providence has assigned as your proper station.' Such, of course, were the dangers of equality, or at least that sort of equality which demolished the barriers between ranks, for the hero who naturally comes to Jacqueline's rescue displays a different sort of levelling, paying her 'as much respect and attention' as if her mistress had been the victim of the ambush, even though 'he knew I was not My Lady'.<sup>59</sup> Craik had made the lesson unmistakable, and it proved to be one that was already familiar from so many of the justifications of inequality that pervaded the '90s. Everyone, no matter what their station in life, deserved the same respect, but not only did they

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<sup>57</sup> Pearson, *The Medallion*, quoted in *Critical Review*, n.s., 12 (1794), 101.

<sup>58</sup> Helen Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet. A Tale* [London, 1800], I, 208.

<sup>59</sup> Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne*, I, 209-10, 219 and 218.

forfeit it when they stepped out of their allotted place, but they brought great danger to themselves and the entire community.

A second means of dramatising the perils of levelling was for novelists to depict an imaginary society in which all distinctions of ranks had, somehow, been abolished. It must have been a particularly satisfying technique for anti-Jacobins to employ as well, for it lampooned the pantisocracies projected by many post-Rousseauian radicals towards the end of the eighteenth century. Prince Massouf witnessed such a community in the novel that bore his name, and though he makes no comment, his descriptions are enough to enforce the lesson. Inequality, we find, is not only natural and necessary, but can only be eradicated, if at all, with ruthless and inhuman force. There is no doctor amongst the 'colony of the enlightened', for instance, for this would destroy equality. And this absence of anyone prepared to learn medical skills had not helped a community that was dwindling in numbers anyway, although the main reasons for this decline were rather more appalling, as Massouf soon discovers:

In the infancy of the colony some of the strongest men had been put to death, by public consent, for encroaching on the weak, and some of the crafty for the same encroachment on the simple. All the persons of weak constitutions had perished through the excess of their labour in tilling the portion of ground allotted to them - all employment but tillage, to which the soil was not grateful, being useless; for barter was forbidden, as sure ground of inequality, which might attain to the most destructive height.<sup>60</sup>

The correct interpretation of Massouf's dream was clear. Levelling could not work, for men differed from one another, a fact which, in itself, provided the proof of inequality's righteousness and its efficacy. But just to attempt such levelling, let alone to achieve it, was a violation of the real rights of men, rights which pertained to their very existence. Did not men have a right to the possession of property, property perhaps accumulated through their own exertions and talents? And who could possibly suggest that men did not have a right to their lives, the very thing that the levellers wished to deprive them of, simply because they were that much more muscular or intelligent than their neighbours?

It was the same lesson that John Moore sought to provide in his *Mordaunt* by telling of the fabled tyrant who had attempted to enforce equality by fastening all his subjects to a bed of iron and stretching all those who were shorter than its length and amputating the limbs of those who were too long.<sup>61</sup> And it was the same lesson that George Walker had wanted his readers to take from the dystopia of his *Vagabond*, the 'Perfect Republic' founded on the 'Principles of Equality and Political Justice', in which no work was ever completed, in which no decisions were ever taken, and in which even procreation had ceased (and, needless to say, there were no doctors either). 'Had nature designed men to be equal,' he deduced, 'she would have endowed them with equal stature, prowess, and intellect', but she had not, and

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<sup>60</sup> Anon., *Massouf*, p.177.

<sup>61</sup> Moore, *Mordaunt*, I, 39n.

men should not be deprived of their right to live as nature had made them.<sup>62</sup> 'There can be no kind of equality for men in society but that of rights,' affirmed Moore, and he was talking of the rights of all to property and to liberty, under law, to live one's life as one saw fit, not the sort of natural rights that justified a political rôle.<sup>63</sup> And Walker enforced the familiar lesson that 'to be invulnerable against the attacks of time, and for the benefit of every individual,' a government 'must be like a pyramid, rising from a broad base to a point', adding that the 'greatest portion of mankind will of necessity be mean; these are the base, and every advance higher is to the benefit of the class of structure, till we rise to a solitary point, which finishes the work.' Only such a structure could provide true equality, he concluded, and Dr Alogos was given the final word, representing the reader with his recognition that 'an *equality*, the most exact and perfect in respect of every moral and social obligation, springs from *inequality* itself'.<sup>64</sup> True equality emanated from the equality of responsibilities incumbent on each member of society, equally important for each degree, whilst 'those who attempt to level,' as Burke had insisted, 'never equalise'.<sup>65</sup>

### 3 Nabobs

Just as levelling had for generations been identified as an incessant hazard, but was deemed to have become particularly dangerous, and particularly in need of a determined reproof, in the era of the French Revolution, so also was the second major threat to British society that anti-Jacobin novelists sought to identify and demolish regarded as not new, but as having reached unprecedented levels of risk in the '90s. Indeed, this second fear had an even less genuine affinity with British radicalism, or the Revolution in France, than had levelling, and could, in fact, hardly be regarded as Jacobin in any strict sense at all. And yet it was the constant endeavour of the anti-Jacobins in the '90s to demonstrate that, like levelling, it was also part of the grand Jacobin conspiracy aiming for nothing less than the undermining of the whole British way of life.

The danger in question was the fear of the social mobility, the fear - as Elizabeth Hamilton put it - of the 'epidemical frenzy, which has of late spread through our country, the desire of shining in a sphere above our own'. In particular, it was the fear of the middle rank of society seeking to rise above their allotted station, a scandal that Hamilton called the 'accursed passion for gentility', and, if anything, it was a fear that was more often and more anxiously treated in the novels of the '90s and 1800s than had been the

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<sup>62</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 180-216 and 211.

<sup>63</sup> Moore, *Mordaunt*, I, 39n.

<sup>64</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 211 and 270.

<sup>65</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. VIII, ed. L. G. Mitchell [Oxford, 1989], p.100.



danger of the more overtly Jacobin political or economic levelling.<sup>66</sup> The difference was that these 'social levellers' were men and women who sought to elevate themselves alone, not to apply a general theory of equality to society, for, as their words and actions proved, they were as jealous of society's divisions as anyone, and often more so, yet their private ambition was just as dangerous to well-ordered society as the very public theorising of any democrat. Their individual challenge to society's ordered ranks represented a glaring dereliction of the duty incumbent on them as a result of their place in society, just as it had been a crime for those in the lower orders to seek to destroy all rank and all distinction. They were frequently shown to be tantamount to the same thing, indeed, for, as we have seen, levelling was customarily exposed as being based only on covetousness, and it was this same envy that motivated any individual seeking to better his or her station. Certainly, it is this that the reader is meant to understand from Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron*, in which she exhibits a mutinous sailor who speaks against rank and discipline, until, that is, he is promoted himself, at which point he becomes a hateful tyrant. His levelling talk, we realise, was purely a cover for his personal ambition, an ambition which might equally have had its expression in an urge for his own promotion.<sup>67</sup> It is an association that is made linguistically, but no less pointedly, in Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaïde*, in which the real rôle of the ambitious, *nouveau-riche* banker who arrives to upset the consecrated, aristocratic order of the village is suggested by his name - Monsieur Levilles, an appellation requiring no English translation to be understood.<sup>68</sup>

Of course, what we also see in Thomas' story of the mutinous sailor promoted to become a tyrant was that he was completely unsuited to his elevated post, his petty dictatorship being the proof that he belonged in his original lowly station (even though he had failed in his duty there too, having refused to accept his humble lot with submission and obedience). Both his original insubordination and his later inadequacy were threats of equal magnitude to the smooth operation of the ship. Stepping out of one's station was not a crime in itself, but would always become one simply because one would not be able to fulfil the duties of one's new position, as the sailor had not been able to perform his. In general, though, in novels this crime was one shown to be committed not by members of the lower orders, but by members of the middle classes, for it was they, we are continually assured, who aspired to join the ranks of gentry and nobility. What they did not realise, seeing only the splendour of the aristocracy and jealous of their lives of opulence and ease, was that under the terms of the bargain of rank, the élite had the most onerous and necessary responsibilities of any in society, and it was exactly because those who were not born to high rank could not fulfil these responsibilities when they found themselves elevated to the height of their aspirations, that they were such a danger to the peace and security of the nation.

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<sup>66</sup> Hamilton, *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, pp.320-21.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, II, 115-19.

<sup>68</sup> Edward Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde, a Moral Tale* [London, 1791], pp.5-11.

In addition to the gravity of this encroachment, novelists doubtlessly tended to concentrate on the incursions of the middling ranks into the province of élite because this middling section of society represented their natural constituency. But perhaps the most compelling reason for the ubiquity of their fictional assault was that by the 1790s novelists possessed a ready-made vocabulary, or demonology, to describe and dramatise the careers of those members of the middling orders who sought to level the wise social barriers set up for the good of the community. The East Indian nabobs, the boarding-school educated, novel-reading misses, the upwardly-mobile *nouveau-riche*, and numerous other assorted imposters and vagabonds all trying to be that which they were not and were not meant to be, had all long been traditional butts of fiction's satire. In particular, the idea of the nabob, the lowly man who had gone away to India or some other equally foreign destination, only to return with a fortune, possibly got by means the most nefarious and uncivilised, was a very serviceable figure for novelists wishing to show the dangers of new, and unmerited, social standing. Anyone who made a vast fortune in a far-away land, and then returned, as if from the dead, decades later, with curious manners and a strange complexion, must have presented an obvious target for ridicule and disdain in a satirical novel. But the nabob was a figure who had been given a new, or at least more contemporary, signification by the trial of Warren Hastings (1788-95), another of Burke's impassioned causes, and a protracted case which tarnished the image of British activity in India for many (although Hastings, the East India Company, and even, in some few aberrations against sensibility, the slave trade, had some capable novel-writing apologists<sup>69</sup>).

Certainly by the turn of the century, the assumption that, as had been alleged in the Hastings case, a nabob's wealth would always be founded on inhumanity and barbarism was enough to turn many authors, even the most ardent defenders of the *status quo*, against them. Isaac D'Israeli, for instance, in his tale, 'The Daughter' (1801), introduced, almost carelessly, one character as 'one of those who amass an Oriental fortune, of which the mere possession might madden the fore head of humanity', and presented the character's complaints about the pale suns and temperate climate of Britain as the very height of

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<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, for instance, dedicated her *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* [London, 1796] to that 'distinguished patron of Shanscrit and Persian literature', Warren Hastings, who had been acquitted the year previous to publication of charges of corruption and cruelty during his administration of India. On the other hand, George Walker launched a vitriolic attack on British rule in India in his *Theodore Cyphon; or, the Benevolent Jew* [1796; London, 1823], describing in gory detail the atrocities committed by the British, and especially those in the service of the East India Company, in their suppression of a revolt of the 'copper-coloured sons of the earth'. His protagonist, we are told, 'quitted the reeking village, where so much had been done to convince the wretched Hindoos of the justice, humanity, and bravery of the British nation' and shuddered at the prospect of remaining in the army since 'my assistance must then be given to injustice and oppression' (II, 189-98). A number of novelists endorsed slavery, but usually only as an acceptance of the *status quo*, often allowing their heroes to ameliorate the lot of the slaves in their possession (e.g. *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School* [London, 1803], I, 134). James Barton, in his *Remorseless Assassin; or the Dangers of Enthusiasm* [London, 1803] went further, talking of the absolute necessity of owning slaves and overcoming any qualms he might have had about owning slaves himself with the supposedly 'more solid argument' that since the world would never renounce the luxuries that derive from holding men in perpetual bondage, to sell his slaves to others would be doing them a disservice, for another master would only treat them more harshly (II, 70-73). See Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* [New Haven, Conn., 1983], p.68n.31, for speculation that the Hastings impeachment case might have been almost a rehearsal on Burke's part for his response to the Revolution, his treatment of Hastings prefiguring his subsequent conception of the Revolutionaries.

ingratitude, so that we hate him because 'on his native spots he bore a foreign heart.'<sup>70</sup> The almost universal opinion was given by Eliza Parsons in *Woman As She Should Be*, whose Mr Menville, having forced our heroine to marry him instead of her true love, added to this conventionally villainous behaviour all the faults of the nabob, as described by Mrs Colemore:

Do you know that I hate your nabobs, accustomed to eastern indulgences, a multiplicity of women, a world of splendour, their whole attention taken up by accumulating riches, at the expense, too often, of justice, mercy, or compassion: all the finer feelings of the soul are subdued. By speculation, by distressing the unhappy, they acquire the greatest part of their fortunes; and, with every humane sentiment expunged, they return with callous hearts to their native country, to dazzle the multitude with their magnificence, and triumph over those who have ten thousand times more merit, but are less beholden to chance or good fortune than themselves.<sup>71</sup>

It is in this last sentence that the real purpose of the nabob in fiction reveals itself, for they were primarily of symbolic value. They return to Britain purely to upset the *status quo*, possibly in a useful way, providing a timely dowry to a penurious heroine perhaps, but more often as a demonstration of the lamentable consequences of capsizing the social order, as a warning to others not let their good fortune trick them into thinking they are better than they are, and as a lesson to others not to let ambition get the better of them. How much happier would the nabob have been, muses Alethea in Smith's *Marchmont* (1796), had he only been 'contented with the humble lot to which he was probably born' and not 'in search of a higher fortune', gone off 'to those climates where the soil, manured with blood, seems to produce only disease and death'.<sup>72</sup> And indeed, novelists were in the happy position of being able to use their plots to prove the folly and vice of seeking to raise oneself above one's allotted station, turning their nabobs into sadder, but wiser, men as they are dragged into ruin and disgrace by their desire to better themselves. The conclusion to *Douglas* (1800) is typical, Robert Bisset telling us that one of his characters, having been bankrupted by the ludicrous extravagance he thought it meet to display, 'heartily regrets the time he left off business and commenced gentleman', a lesson made even more overt by Elizabeth Hamilton who, adding a spiritual dimension, had one of her characters explain that his bankruptcy had taught him the error of his ambition - 'for had I been contented to go on with my business, as my father did before me, on a scale within my means, my profits, though small, would have been certain', but that because he 'wished to raise my wife and bairns above their station', 'God, who saw the pride of my heart, has punished me'.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Isaac D'Israeli, 'The Daughter; or, A Modern Romance', in *Romances; To which is now added 'A Modern Romance'* [London, 1801], p.218.

<sup>71</sup> Eliza Parsons, *Woman As She Should Be; or, Memoirs of Mrs Menville. A Novel* [London, 1793], III, 86.

<sup>72</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont*, III, 58.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Bisset, *Douglas; or, the Highlander* [London, 1800], IV, 375; Hamilton, *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, p.286.

As these examples illustrate, the 'nabob' did not have to be an East Indian adventurer, for the same rôle could be taken just as well by any social upstart. Clara Reeve located her nabobs, for instance, in the fourteenth century, where, she made it abundantly clear, they were worthy of just as much contempt and consternation. 'In the times of our Gothic ancestors', she informed the reader of her *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, 'the man who lived, or dressed beyond his degree in life, would have been scorned, shunned, and despised by all his neighbourhood.'<sup>74</sup> A more common target amongst novelists, though, was the contemporary bourgeoisie, although no author saw fit to provide a specific definition of exactly who fell within this class. A general pattern of attack is evident, but lacking any precise focus. Charles Lloyd, for instance, quite specifically detailed his 'nabob', Mr Clutterbuck, as 'a person who, from the lowest situation in life, has raised himself by personal industry to the important rank of a man possessing 100,000l.', but Francis Lathom established his Sir Gilbert Oxmondeley in the vaguest of terms as an humble tradesman in the City, before suddenly elevating him to a baronetcy and a fortune (so much of a shock that his wife had instantly died in exultation), and Mary Robinson defined her Alderman Bradford only as 'a rich citizen' who wanted to show all mankind that he was 'as great a man as the first lord in the land, and as proud too' - an ambition that would plunge his family into the standard dire consequences.<sup>75</sup>

Like the nabob, and like Burke's famous 'stock-jobbers', these tradesmen were simply metaphors for social mobility. Such figures might lend themselves perfectly to a class-based, and Marxist, analysis, but their rôle was really as a social, not economic, challenge to the feudal order. It was a rôle that these nabobs and tradesmen had to share, in other words, with a wide variety of other upstarts, all of whom challenged the hierarchies of society, but, on the surface at least, presented a much less revolutionary threat than has been traditionally ascribed to the continually rising bourgeoisie. In fact, nabobism was the primary characteristic of a whole mesh of intertwined groups appearing in novels as challenges to proper hierarchy. A boarding-school education, for example, came under repeated attack in novels for providing young women with an education totally unfitted for their real expectations and duties, for encouraging 'nabobish' tendencies as one might say. 'From boarding schools to prostitution the course is easy, expeditious, and daily trodden', wrote Bisset, arguing that the refined accomplishments young women acquired at such schools could only render them unsatisfied with the humble rôle in life to which they would, if they were to be happy, eventually have to acquiesce. It was the same fault of which novels were guilty, for they too seemed to tell every young reader that he or she was a hero or heroine just waiting to

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<sup>74</sup> Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, I, 67.

<sup>75</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, II, 109; Lathom, *Men and Manners*, I, 131-34; Robinson, *Natural Daughter*, I, 145. Lathom heaps particularly sumptuous opprobrium on his nabob, Sir Gilbert, and his family. He and his daughter, Eliza, exhibit their unfitness for their elevated station by, amongst many other things, their lack of taste, erecting fake ruins in their gardens and boarding up rooms in their house in the hope that their visitors might think them haunted (I, 154-55). Ultimately, the vicissitudes of the plot make Eliza an actress, a symbolically fitting fate, for she had only ever acted the part of an aristocrat, whilst Sir Gilbert similarly deserves his second wife, the duplicitous Miss Darlington, who had inveigled him into marriage by impersonating the aristocratic Lady MacGroger - no more a pretence, we realise, than his own attempts to play the 'squire.



be discovered. Indeed, many novelists were quick to show their own awareness of the supposed propensity of their chosen form to incite in their readers aspirations above their station, and they doubtlessly hoped to exculpate themselves of the charge by detailing the process in their fiction.<sup>76</sup> On its own, such folly was not possessed of much revolutionary potential, but as part of the overall pattern of nabobism, it became far more dangerous.

The revolutionary threat becomes more evident when we appreciate that nabobism was the specific crime for which new philosophy was often indicted, for it too corroded all social distinctions, encouraging its adherents to be dissatisfied with their station by telling them that social and political distinctions were mere prejudices that ought to be levelled. It is an association that becomes manifest when we compare Eliza Oxmondeley, the daughter of the nabob of Lathom's *Men and Manners*, with Bridgetina Botherim, the budding new philosopher of Elizabeth Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers*. Whilst Eliza's errors are not more serious than her desire to transform the Oxmondeley estate into the sort of place she has read about in innumerable novels, full of eerie woods and decaying chambers, Bridgetina had adopted all the delusive principles of Godwin, Wollstonecraft and Hays. Both these patterns of transgressive behaviour, though, may be directly traced back to the social ambition of their widowed parents, especially the encouragement the two daughters were given to read novels. Mrs Botherim, Hamilton stresses right at the beginning of *Modern Philosophers*, is ill-educated and vulgar, but designs her daughter to move in a sphere much more elevated than her own, and praises her supposed erudition: 'You have no ideer [*sic*] what a scholar she is,' she tells one of her friends, 'she has read every book in the circulating library'.<sup>77</sup> But since her background has not provided her with the selectivity and discernment to sift and understand the books she reads, Bridgetina's education has been her ruin, for she has been drawn only to novels and metaphysics, been caught in the snares of the designing new philosophers who frequent the library, and indeed, repays her mother's fondness with impertinence. Exactly the same is true of Eliza, save only that since Lathom was not concerned to write an explicitly anti-Jacobin novel, her sins are less obviously ideological. Their rootedness in her vulgar father's ambition, though, remains evident: 'The reading of novels, without sufficient discrimination to choose characters worthy of imitation', writes Lathom, had given Eliza 'a language and manners, whose flippancy and ill-managed gaiety her father,

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<sup>76</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, II, 39-40. Bisset's conjecture was frequently dramatised, both by himself and others. See for instance the tale of Kitty Harris, victim of a boarding school education in *The History of Sir George Warrington*, III, 125-55, especially p.152, and an inset story of a courtesan whom the hero of *Douglas* meets, in which Bisset perfectly knitted together the two threads of the destructive ambition fomented by a boarding school and the novels to be found there: "'Her parents," she said, "were inferior tradespeople, whose foolish vanity had prompted them to send her to a boarding school; there she had learned nothing that could be useful in her station, and many things that must be hurtful in any station; that her fancy had been dazzled by novels, which the young ladies were allowed to read, and she hoped to meet with as extraordinary good fortune as befell the heroines of those novels, many of whom, though brought up to no manner of useful employment, with no fortune of their own, to enable them, with prudence to live in idleness - by the discovery of some new relation, by the death of some twentieth cousin, quickly came to a great fortune, or, by their beauty and accomplishments got a great match.'" As a result of her education, the woman had refused the several honest, but humble, offers of marriage she had received, and had been easily tempted by a licentious guardsman into losing her honour, from which point began her descent into prostitution, wretchedness and poverty (II, 171-74).

<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* [2nd edn., London, 1800], I, 3.

unlettered in the qualities for which he mistook them, conceived to be elegance and wit'. Whilst Lathom ensures that his readers know that Eliza is neither witty nor elegant, but disgusting in her affectation, her father actually encourages her to make him the butt of her supposed wit. In doing so he only emphasises the grotesque inversion of the familiar hierarchy, at the head of which he ought to be, which his pretensions to refinement and rank have brought on.<sup>78</sup>

The association of nabobism and new philosophy was not always made, however, for though nabobs posed a revolutionary challenge, it was a challenge that was neither theoretical or ideological, nor even really intentional, but rather the result of extreme folly. Of the procession of upstarts that fills the neighbouring house to the old-established Ellesmere family in Charlotte Smith's *Banished Man* (1794), only one is made overtly Jacobin, being a newly-rich, Presbyterian business-man who has the audacity to display busts of Benjamin Franklin, Richard Price, and Thomas Paine in his house. But this is rather unusual, and whilst 'Squire Ellesmere despises him for his republicanism as well as religion, making our hero drink a toast to the confusion of all such 'Dissenters, Roundheads and Sans Culottes', Mrs Ellesmere more typically detests the fact that her previously unquestioned social eminence has been challenged by the newcomer.<sup>79</sup> The important lesson hinted at here, and advanced by anti-Jacobin fiction as a whole, is that all the nabobs who inhabit the house, whatever their politics, have the same potential to wreak ruin on society, for all are usurpers of the prestige and, more worryingly, the function of the traditional, age-sanctioned grandee. Moreover, all have expropriated the rightful inheritance of others, doubtlessly more fit for that rôle, and have done so in exactly the same way as had the Manfreds and Montonis of the conventional gothic novel, adding another layer of resonance to these portraits. It is no coincidence that the favourite book of Mary, the enchanting heroine of Brydges' *Mary de Clifford* (1792), is 'the inimitable *Castle of Otranto*', with its tale of the true heir dispossessed by a repugnant usurper, for its plot mirrors her own predicament. She loves the melancholy Woodville, of 'the most illustrious descent' but whose natural benevolence and talents were going to waste because of his family's poverty, but she is being persecuted by Sir Peter Lumm, whose father had built up his fortune from nothing in a woollen-draper's shop, and who, 'perhaps through villainy', had been created a baronet and bought his estate.<sup>80</sup> This was the sort of usurpation that, according to Brydges, was happening daily in modern Britain, and it had to be stopped. 'I fear that silent scorn will not protect us from the incalculable evils of which the manner of such men are

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<sup>78</sup> Lathom, *Men and Manners*, I, 150-51. In both *Men and Manners* and *Modern Philosophers*, the wayward daughters ultimately reform, coming to understand, at last, their true places in both the familial and social hierarchies.

<sup>79</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Banished Man* [London, 1794], II, 105.

<sup>80</sup> Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, *Mary de Clifford* [1792, London, 1845], pp.5-6 and 56. Sir Peter, as well as propositioning trembling virgins, 'could not brook the traces of former ages', we are told as a further clue to his political rôle, and spends his time knocking down ancient avenues of oaks and the odd mansion, replacing them with fashionable eyesores 'large and showy enough to form a modern hospital'. This brings to mind Burke's metaphors, of course, and not just in the general terms of the *Reflections*, for specifically, Burke, as Brydges, regarded noblemen as 'the great oaks that shade a country, and perpetuate ... benefits from generation to generation', Letter to the Duke of Richmond, 15 November 1772, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Lucy S. Sutherland [Cambridge, 1960], II, 337.

the prognostications,' said Brydges in another of his novels, telling us that he meant specifically 'stock-jobbers, loan-contractors, army and navy-contractors, and East-Indians', and that the evils he feared were 'either despotism, or anarchy!' If in *The Castle of Otranto*, the usurpation had very definitely brought the *despotism* feared by Brydges, Manfred ruling Otranto with an iron fist and a depraved will, he was very much afraid that in late eighteenth century Britain, 'nabobism' would assuredly bring the sort of *anarchy* into which the French had been plunged by their ill-advised attempts to meddle with the rightful order of society.<sup>81</sup>

Brydges, genealogist and long-term litigant at law (in the not unconnected, and not surprisingly unsuccessful, attempt to have himself recognized as the Earl of Chandos), was to take the anti-nabob campaign to its furthest extent in his three novels, and in doing so, turned it into something fairly ludicrous to the modern reader. He parroted Burke's arguments, but nevertheless seemed to be exactly one of those 'creeping sycophants ... the blind admirers of power' who, Burke himself regretted, always idolised hereditary wealth.<sup>82</sup> Burke had made it clear that ability had its place in the governance of the nation - 'You do not imagine that I wish to confine power, authority, and distinction to blood, and names, and titles', he had written in the *Reflections* - but had insisted that it needed a probationary period, as it were, to prove itself, and that, since ability was so active and vigorous whilst property was always so 'sluggish, inert and timid', hereditary property needed special support.<sup>83</sup> To a certain extent Brydges had to agree that ability should be somehow recognised, for otherwise Burke himself would have been excluded from power, but although he conceded this in his third novel, *Le Forester*, startlingly, it did not stop him arraigning most of Pitt's government for their lowly origins.<sup>84</sup> And on the whole, Brydges went further than his mentor, filling his fiction with Burke's arguments, in Burke's phrases, but making full use of the license allowed to a novelist by relentlessly condemning all nabobism without restraint. He was livid, as he explained in the preface to the second edition of *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, that recent years had seen a sustained endeavour 'to overturn all the antient [*sic*] principles of society, to treat the pretensions of birth, not only with contempt, but abhorrence, and to give a daily increasing influence to new-got wealth,

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<sup>81</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, II, 110-111.

<sup>82</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 102-103.

<sup>83</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 101-102.

<sup>84</sup> Le Forester 'thought to such a man as Burke, for instance, every path of ambition, every seat of honour ought to have been open, even if his birth and fortunes had been cast in the lowest state of obscurity', whilst another of his heroes conceded that 'In a free country, it is, or ought to be, open to everyone to obtain wealth by his industry, his ingenuity, or his spirit! But', he felt obliged to add, 'I think the prosperous men might be content, without forcing his swollen purse into one's face, by way of blinding one, and then kicking up one's heels.' Brydges, *Le Forester, A Novel* [London, 1802], I, 227, and *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, I, 257. Though a great admirer of Pitt, Brydges does regret that the 'great Minister' did not give hereditary rank its due rôle in his administration, being 'a little too confident of his own powers, a little too jealous of the participation of his Herculean labours'. Furthermore, he remembers from college the 'boys' with whom Pitt has surrounded himself, individuals who were 'of no abilities, and lustre of descent, and many of low, some even of the lowest, extraction and connections and without even the qualification of property.' Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, II, 44-45.

however acquired and whencesoever sprung'. And his novels he produced as warnings to the nation, echoing Burke's language and his deep concern about the proximity of revolution:

Riches are fugitive; birth is inseparable from the person; new-got wealth is active and intriguing; antient property is sluggish, though, upon great occasions, of much reliance and mighty power. If the barrier of birth is thrown down, a restless and wicked ambition will never cease to disturb the quiet of society.<sup>85</sup>

Where Brydges was unusual amongst novelists, though, was that he endeavoured to explain what was implicit, but seldom explained, in other attacks on nabobism - just why it was that nabobs threatened revolution.

According to much orthodox conservative eighteenth century political theory, it was proper that property should form the basis of political influence for a variety of practical and moral reasons. Men of considerable property, spokesmen for conservative ideology generally agreed, as well as having such a substantial stake in the nation that they would be particularly zealous for its well-being, were more likely to possess the intelligence, abilities, and discernment to govern the nation well, either themselves or by proxy through limited democracy. Moreover, their wealth made them impartial, unprejudiced, and unlikely to implement mercenary measures, whether to enrich themselves or to sell out the nation, and their resources endowed them with the leisure necessary to perform such an important rôle on behalf of the whole country. For evident reasons, this theory admitted of a degree of that concern about new-got wealth which we have seen, for those suddenly elevated to a status which entitled them to political power might well be deficient in one or more of these qualities, and thus it was that Burke had insisted on a probationary period to evaluate whether their talents and wisdom matched their economic status to the extent that they ought to be allowed to participate in government. On the other hand, though, this was not an objection that really stood up to reasoned scrutiny, either on theoretical grounds - for property was the sole index of fitness for political influence that theoreticians had thought fit to postulate and nabobs clearly met this qualification - or on practical grounds - for the mere *newness* of wealth could hardly have been institutionalised as a bar to a political rôle in real life. Both Pitt and Fox, after all, came from newly wealthy families, the Pitts, indeed, deriving their wealth from a ancestor who could have formed the pattern for all East Indian nabobs. Nor, for that matter, was the newness of wealth an objection that could be taken into consideration in the franchise, and it was for these reasons that, as Dickinson has found, although many 'Country spokesmen were fearful of the political influence of financiers, stockjobbers and other monied men, whose wealth was fluid, insecure, based on speculation', not 'all conservative spokesmen for the government shared such fears'.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, I, 297.

<sup>86</sup> Dickinson, *Politics of the People*, p.265.



Novelists, though, were much more united and severe in their campaign against nabobs than those anti-Jacobins who used other mediums than fiction. Partly this was because, as we have seen, it was a campaign which conventional fictional modes naturally supported, but their fervent solidarity also stemmed from the fact that they took a different line to the exclusively political anti-Jacobins, manufacturing nabobism as primarily a threat to the social, rather than the political, order. It soon becomes apparent that their condemnations of nabobs and their ilk were fundamentally based on the inability of such figures to carry out the basic social duties of the class to which they had so recently been elevated, irrespective of their political competence, or lack of it. Principally, nabobs, we are told, did not ameliorate the lot of those less fortunate than themselves, whether by dispensing charity or by kind words, and as a result the bonds which held society together in harmony began to dissolve. It was a failing to which servants especially were intuitively attuned, apparently, for they were the losers when the élite did not fulfil their side of the social bargain. The complaint of Mrs Moseley, a housekeeper in Smith's *Marchmont*, for example, could stand for innumerable others. 'But so it is!' she says, whilst conducting our heroine around the almost ruined mansion of which she has the care, a building now decaying because the real, hereditary owners have been forced out by a coalition of parvenus and lawyers, 'such upstart creatures may be rich, but they are never gentlemen - nor know how to behave as such' - a sentiment, we are told, to which Alethea 'very heartily assented.'<sup>87</sup>

However, the real danger threatened by nabobs, it was held, was that this failure to fulfil the socially conciliating duties incumbent upon the élite led inexorably to a dissatisfaction with the hierarchical structure of society among the lower orders, a discontent that was not appeased - as it would be by the rightful social order - by any of the benefits of hierarchy that make subservience bearable, if not whole-heartedly to be welcomed. The nabob did not fulfil his or her side of the social bargain, and consequently inequality lost its principal justification. Thomas Skinner Surr's description of the Emerys, a *nouveau-riche* family whose fortune has derived from business, in his *George Barnwell* of 1798, is particularly revealing in this respect:

Instead ... of alleviating the consequences of that inequality of society (*which experience seems to pronounce inevitable*), the occupation of their lives was to increase that splendour, which dazzled - but never cheered the poor! The feelings of benevolence, the impulse of charity, the glow of sensibility, are words they may have heard, but emotions they had never felt.<sup>88</sup>

Benevolence, charity, sensibility - these were the links in the great chain of being, and once they had been cut, a restless populace was left not just with a harder existence, but, more worryingly, with no reason to

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<sup>87</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont*, I, 296.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Skinner Surr, *George Barnwell. A Novel* [London, 1798], III, 144-45.

respect or submit to their social betters. The implication was clear. Nabobism provoked social unrest which in the 1790s and 1800s could mean only revolution.

And if Surr had merely implied the peril, Brydges spelt it out, and at some length. 'If aristocracy be wise, let these things be heeded', he wrote in the preface to *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, before setting down the reasons for his hatred of nabobs which proved deducible into three basic maxims. The first and second of these are fairly self-explanatory, and not at all new. 'The man who inherits an honour is generally more virtuous, if not more able, than its first acquirer', he asserted, omitting any justification of his opinion since he evidently felt so strong a conviction that he could not conceive of any objection. His second maxim advanced his argument that fixed and unalterable hierarchies were what kept the peace amongst the lower orders, as became apparent when he insisted that among 'the principal advantages of hereditary rank, is its tendency to soften the heart-burnings of inequality, by counteracting the operations of intrigue, violence, extortion, and dishonourable riches.' But it was his third maxim that formed the crux of his argument. To bestow respect and pre-eminence on new-got wealth, he warned, 'will establish an inequality which, as neither prejudice nor philosophy can defend [it], must involve in its downfall the system with which it is connected.'<sup>89</sup> His defence of inequality, we find, rested on two props, neither of them of his own construction, but both under new, or newly vigorous, attack by nabobism. On the one hand, these social parvenus corroded the 'prejudice', by which he meant the habits of ages which accustomed mankind to subordination, which maintained the peace of society, the 'sort of magic sound in a superior title, which induces the multitude... to exalt the thus-gifted mortal into a phoenix', as Mary Meeke put it, and which would thus effectually counter those who 'talk of the levelling system, and of mankind being equal.'<sup>90</sup> And on the other hand, nabobs undermined that 'philosophy' which convinced all citizens of every degree that inequality was right, by which he meant the arguments for the intrinsic, practical benefits of hierarchical society which we have seen to have been so generally posited as a defence of inequality.

Nabobs, in other words, because their new status had not been sanctioned by generations of power and influence wielded wisely and well, and because they did not carry out their side of the social bargain, put inequality and those who defended it in an embarrassed position, for inequality was necessary but could no longer be justified. And if it could not be justified then any one envious of those above them had, if not the prerogative, then the understandable motivation, for aspiring to the status of their betters, and seeking to fulfil that aspiration by violent, not to say levelling, means. It was a warning that Brydges made crystal-clear later in the novel:

If once the respect that has in all ages and nations been paid to birth, be totally abandoned; if hereditary riches, education, and those habits of early life, which give exalted sentiments, and expanded powers of thinking, be not considered as generally necessary to qualify man for the superior orders of society - it will soon appear that all

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<sup>89</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, I, xv-xvi.

<sup>90</sup> Meeke, *Conscience* (1814), quoted in John Garrett's introduction to Meeke's *Count St Blancard*, I, xxiii.

the principles upon which subordination of ranks can be defended by the philosopher, are subverted; that all the evils without the advantages of inequality of conditions are imposed upon mankind...

- the inevitable result being 'that every order is excited to a restless and dangerous fermentation; while the meanest and the worst of mankind, trample in bloated wealth and honours, on the necks of the people.'<sup>91</sup>

There is no doubt that Brydges was more extreme in his detestation of nabobs and the *nouveau-riche* than most of his fellow anti-Jacobins, and was far more panic-stricken about the likely consequences. Nevertheless, nabobism was almost universally condemned by novelists, and whatever the exact balance each author was seeking to strike between comic effect and a serious political lesson by such satire, it was always an attack that was based on the threat such characters posed to the harmonious and stable society for so long enjoyed in Britain. It comes as something of a shock, then, when in *Such Follies Are*, an epistolary novel issuing from the Minerva Press in 1795, the anonymous author takes what seems to be the opposite line, condemning the *in-situ* nobles for their decadence and praising the nabobish, and decidedly bourgeois, characters who arrive to reform the vicinity. 'You have long known,' the narrator tells his correspondent in his first letter, 'my utter detestation of those Aristocratical principles which would reduce the bulk of mankind to a servile awe of the hereditary privileges and honours of a few', before launching into an unprecedented celebration of those who have not inherited, but have made their wealth. 'To see a set of individuals claiming pre-eminence over the rest of their species, merely from the adventitious circumstance of family descent, abstractedly from any regard for talent or virtue,' he says, 'is enough to move the risibility of a Philosopher,' while it must be with indignation that he 'beholds those truly valuable members of society' - the farmer, mechanic, manufacturer, and merchant, considered as 'a race of beings, unworthy to inhale the common air of heaven.' And indeed, the remainder of the novel's letters endeavour to debunk just this fallacy, the Hanburys, rich merchants now settled in the countryside, ceaselessly exposing the folly and fraud of their neighbours, the aristocratical Seaforths, and their circle. The nabobs win all our sympathy for their careful philanthropy, and, ultimately, we cannot help but agree with the author's insistence that 'that respectable body of Englishmen, called the middle class ... in fact, forms the strength and glory of the state.'<sup>92</sup>

However, a consciousness that in the mid-1790s such sentiments must necessarily have taken on a distinctly radical hue is revealed by the speed and vigour with which our author refutes any suggestion of Jacobin sympathies, having Mr Hanbury regularly denigrate the 'desperate attempts' of the French for liberty and then eulogise King, Lords and Commons with equal fervour. Amongst much other ostentatious anti-Jacobinism, Hanbury pronounces that 'I am not a leveller myself,' and insists that he would do everything possible to 'prevent the mercenary and ignorant from levelling even with the dust the

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<sup>91</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, I, 77-78.

<sup>92</sup> Anon., *Such Follies Are: A Novel* [London, 1795], I, 1, 2-3, and 4-5.

dignity of the British Constitution, which contains in its structure all that is precious to civilized society'.<sup>93</sup> The difference from the conservatism to which we have become used, however, is that, for Hanbury, anti-Jacobinism includes, even requires, rebuking and resisting the aristocracy, not on principle, but wherever he sees it corrupted, as is the case with the Seaforths. Indeed, the accusations of levelling, to which we have just heard Hanbury respond, were brought about by his refusal to support the candidature of Edric Seaforth in a Parliamentary election, a refusal made on the grounds that such a dissolute aristocrat could not perform his duty at Westminster and could only make Britain the more vulnerable to the assaults of the Jacobins.

*Such Follies Are*, even if it may still be considered an anti-Jacobin novel, remains exceptional, exalting as it does a family of nabobs and warning against 'Aristocratical principles' to a much greater extent than was orthodox. But although its attacks on a corrupt aristocracy may have been far more conspicuous than was usual, they were far from unique in conservative fiction. Indeed, such criticism constitutes simply an exaggerated expression of the last of the three great threats, along with levelling and nabobism, which anti-Jacobin fiction consistently identified as so imperiling British society. However, since the anti-Jacobin conception of a corrupted élite was necessarily accompanied by their schemes for its reform, for to criticise unreservedly the *status quo* could only be regarded as Jacobin in its effect, even if not its intent, this is a subject that requires consideration in some depth in a further chapter.

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<sup>93</sup> Anon., *Such Follies Are*, I, 134.



## 7: The Manners of the Great

Men who are born to fortune are appointed by Providence to the administration of a certain portion of the interests of the world: they are the helmsmen of happiness; and if they desert the wheel, is there any wonder that the even course should be lost?

- Robert Dallas, *Percival, or Nature Vindicated. A Novel* (1801)

The problems of defining the meaning of revolution are well known. Perhaps the best the historian can say in respect of the average Briton in the late eighteenth century, hearing of events of France in the 1790s and receiving the gloss being put on them by the forces of anti-Jacobinism at home, is that the idea of revolution must have been composed of a curious formula, part irreligion and part licentiousness, part foolish idealism and part bloody carnage, part incompetent anarchy and part cogent military menace. If revolution was to strike Britain, though, whether imported from France or home-grown, the most common understanding of its effect was as a system of levelling which would destroy the social hierarchies which, as we saw in the last chapter, had been presented by numerous authors as the source of the nation's peace and prosperity. Clearly then, levelling itself was a great danger, and one that anti-Jacobin novelists lost no time in exposing to censure. Nabobism too, as we have seen, was reprehended as harmful to social and economic hierarchies because such social mobility annihilated both the divisions which wisely separated ranks and undermined the reasons for those divisions, this new élite having no idea of how they ought to fulfil the conciliating duties incumbent upon those at the head of society. If we are to believe the frightened assertions of anti-Jacobin fiction, the third great threat to Britain's well-being was posed by the corruption of her own élite, even those who, unlike the nabobs, had an unimpeachable pedigree, and thus an incontrovertible right to sit at the head of society. Such corruption, as we shall be examining in this chapter, was figured as every bit as dangerous as levelling, for it generated and encouraged it, and every bit as injurious to the nation's health as nabobism, for a corrupt aristocrat, no less than a nabob, did not fulfil his or her duties and therefore destabilised the nation from the top every bit as surely as a leveller's attempts to do so from the bottom.

### *1 The corruption of the élite*

Criticism of the aristocracy in fiction, of course, was not a new phenomenon that developed in the 1790s only in response to the Revolution. Novelists had long peopled their works, almost to the exclusion of all

other classes, with that section of society which, whether actually composed of peers or of gentry, may be considered to be a vaguely defined but still homogenous patrician class called variously the aristocracy, the élite, or, as Hannah More chose to designate them, the 'great'. By and large, authors' purpose in detailing the affairs of the great was to entertain, to exhibit *ton* and taste, and perhaps to encourage awe and admiration, as the Silver-Fork novelists would continue to strive to do in the decades after the Revolution crisis. But when their chosen *dramatis personae* and the demands of their plots, which in general absolutely required a villain or two, collided, their novels necessarily involved some depiction of élite corruption. Moreover, it was a simple matter for novelists to turn their novels of fashionable life into satirical attacks on the debauchery of the aristocracy, the nobility's very real influence and power in late eighteenth century society making foolish or wicked aristocrats, men and women who did not live up to well-defined standards, a natural and worthwhile target.

If a satirical attack on corrupted aristocracy had long been inherent in the novel, sometimes taking a moral tone, sometimes not, the much more coherent and evangelical, and indeed Evangelical, assault on élite immorality re-launched in the wake of the American War of Independence (according to Joanna Innes' recent appraisal), was likewise not a new phenomenon, even if it did get invested with a new sense of urgency in the '90s.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that the campaign of William Wilberforce and Hannah More, of the Clapham Sect and the Proclamation Society, and of numerous other individuals and groups, was a movement, if such it can be called, which pre-dated the Revolution. The King's *Proclamation Against Vice and Immorality*, the culmination of a short campaign by Evangelical groups, had appeared in 1787 for instance, and More's *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society* was published a year later, going through seven editions before the Fall of the Bastille.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Gerald Newman has gone so far as to assert that the Evangelicals deliberately hijacked anti-Jacobinism, so that they might use it as a screen behind which to attack the aristocracy.<sup>3</sup> The question naturally arises, therefore, of whether the attacks on the dissolute manners of the great in the novels of the '90s represented anything new, and fitted to its immediate political context, or whether they represented simply the continuation of an existing campaign.

This is not an easy question to answer immediately, even if there were a number of major novelists, such as Jane West for one, who were eager to blame the coming 'annihilation of thrones and alters' not on 'the successful arms of France,' but on those corrupt and corrupting principles, emanating

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<sup>1</sup> Joanna Innes, 'Politics and Morals. The Reformation of Manners Movement in Later Eighteenth-Century England' in *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Later Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth [Oxford, 1990], pp.60-61. For some specific manifestations of the reform of manners 'movement' see also V. Kiernan, 'Evangelicalism and the French Revolution', *Past and Present*, 1 (1952), 44-56; Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability. Sunday Schools and Working-Class Culture, 1780-1850* [New Haven, Conn., 1976]; and M. J. D. Roberts, 'The Society For the Suppression of Vice and Its Early Critics, 1802-1812', *The Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), 159-176.

<sup>2</sup> M. G. Jones, *Hannah More* [Cambridge, 1952], pp.104-105.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism. A Cultural History 1740-1830* [London, 1987], p.234.

from the fashionable élite, which 'by dissolving domestic confidence and undermining private worth, paved the way for universal confusion.'<sup>4</sup> Much of the literature of the would-be reformers of manners in the 1780s - their tracts and treatises, their earnest letters to editors - made much of the particularly alarming 'temper of the times', so when we find that those who sought to pressure the élite into reforming their behaviour in the '90s used similar phrases, warning the élite that it was more important than ever that they reform during such a grave crisis in human existence, we cannot be certain that they had been prompted to do so only by the advent of a new revolutionary danger coming from France. Also, many of those novels written in the midst of the Revolution crisis which urge a reformation of the manners of the great do so by insisting that the aristocracy stop duelling, or gambling, or profaning the Sabbath, the same set-piece battles, in other words, that Wilberforce and More had been fighting in the '80s (and were continuing to fight), but which bore no specific relation to the ideological or military struggle with France and the Revolution in the '90s.<sup>5</sup> Some of the most virulently anti-Jacobin novelists, of course, were at the forefront of the Evangelical campaign, and Jane West, for instance, pointedly insisted that she cared little for religion as a means of maintaining the stability and harmony of society if its beliefs were not actually inscribed on the hearts of those who saw fit to profess it.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, even if almost all anti-Jacobin fiction recognised that aristocracy in itself did not always merit unqualified approval, the terms in which novelists expressed this knowledge were often so glib, not to say trite, that it seems largely devoid of any genuine conviction. Francis Lathom, for example, devoted substantial sections of his *Men and Manners* (1799) to criticising the corrupt amongst the nobility, but ultimately his opinions could be condensed into the rather anodyne adage delivered by one of his characters as 'Rank and fortune add weight to virtue; but without it they claim no distinction'.<sup>7</sup> Even the supremely aristocratical Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges

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<sup>4</sup> The corruptions West was specifically referring to were the nullity of the nuptial tie, the annihilation of parental authority, the eradication of chastity and the degradation of religion into a 'sentimental effusion'. 'Such engines,' she maintained, 'are sufficiently powerful to overturn governments, and to shake the deep-founded base of the firmest empires.' Jane West, *Tale of the Times* [London, 1799], II, 274-75.

<sup>5</sup> In Eliza Parsons' *Woman As She Should Be; or, Memoirs of Mrs Menville* [London, 1793], for instance, the principal symbol of the corruption of the aristocracy is gambling, not an explicitly 'political' vice, although it is implied that were the élite to reform themselves, it would not be themselves alone, but the whole nation, that would benefit: '...ah! would to heaven our young men of quality would consider what happiness they might diffuse among many unfortunate families, with the sums they hourly dissipate in extravagance and gambling!' (IV, 64). Sentiments similarly worthy of More or Wilberforce are to be found in the anonymous *The Citizen's Daughter; or What Might Be* [London, 1804], in which it is duelling that symbolises the depravity of the nobility, a corruption that is overcome by Lord Morden with the realisation that 'as a peer of the realm, whose duty it is to correct and support the established laws of his country, dare I transgress to revenge an individual injury?' (p.223). Likewise, the Sabbatarianism that we find in Charles Lucas' *The Infernal Quixote. A Tale of the Day* [London, 1801] would not be out of place in a moral treatise from the 1780s and is a little surprising in one of the most determined of anti-Jacobin novels. Yet early on in the novel, Lord James Marauder is indicted not for any crime that could be called 'Jacobin', but for allowing his gamekeeper to shoot on Sundays (I, 11). Only later does Marauder show his truly Jacobin credentials (for which see below).

<sup>6</sup> West severely reprehends her Lord Glanville for his infidelity even though he was a man whose 'political creed led him to acknowledge the utility of religion as a state engine' and despite the fact that 'he considered that it would be both indecorous and unwise for a member of the highest court of legislature to ridicule publicly what was essential to the well-being of the community, and intimately interwoven with the principles of the constitution', retaining his irreligion as 'a sort of aristocratic privilege ... improper to be disclosed to the profane.' West, *The Infidel Father* [London, 1802], I, 145-46.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Lathom, *Men and Manners. A Novel* [London, 1799], II, 330.

evidently felt that such a sentiment would not compromise his always emphatic endorsement of anything highborn, telling his readers that, although Le Forester, one of his wish-fulfillingly autobiographical heroes, 'prized illustrious birth, he was not so foolish as to consider it an excuse for ignorance, meanness, or wickedness', but 'thought a vicious man of noble descent to be rendered doubly odious and criminal by contrast'.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, much anti-Jacobin fiction did criticise the behaviour of the élite in terms which pertained directly to the concerns of the Revolution crisis. On a rather frivolous level, in his *George Barnwell* (1798), Thomas Skinner Surr, a man who would go on to make a very successful career out of the novel of fashionable life, delighted in showing the reader how aristocratic corruption could militate against the patriotism which ought to have been mandatory during the conflict with France. He describes how Lord Morley, a fop, burst into the room with what he calls news of the first consequence - that a man worth a whole corps of soldiers has escaped from the French. Mr Freeman, a Yorkshireman of good sense, naturally supposes that Sir Sidney Smith, the admiral, is meant, but after the usual confusion we find that it is Monsieur Caperonis, 'the first dancer in Europe' to whom Morley is referring.<sup>9</sup> Far more explicit in linking aristocratic corruption and Jacobinism, though, is Charles Lucas' *Infernal Quixote* (1801). Here the intertwined fates of two boys born at exactly the same time and in the same village - one Lord James Marauder, the aristocratical and Jacobinical quixote of the title, the other lowly Wilson Wilson, our humble yet loyal and heroic protagonist - perfectly exhibit the standard maxim soon gleaned by Wilson that 'it required something more than high birth, education, or abilities to make a gentleman'. Yet Lord Marauder's depravity is figured not as excessive gambling or even inveterate promiscuity, but as an incendiary career amongst the United Irishmen, a clear and decidedly contemporary case for the corruption of the élite.<sup>10</sup> Other authors similarly suggested that aristocratic corruption was indeed the exact counterpart of new philosophy, although they generally exhibited their corrupt aristocrats operating according to Jacobin patterns in the domestic sphere, not the public life in which Marauder had operated. It was no trouble to demonstrate, for instance, that the sexual predation of a libertine aristocrat was the exact equivalent of the licentiousness of the new philosopher - a parallel reproachfully drawn out by Charlotte Smith in a foot-note in her *Young Philosopher* (1798) which noted the ease with which the libidinous sentiments regarding the folly of matrimony of 'a man of the world, ready to acquiesce in all that world dictates' could be confused with those of a new philosopher, such as her hero had been assumed to be, who could also see flaws in matrimony.<sup>11</sup> And it was equally easy to contend, as Jane West did in her *Tale of the Times* (1799), that a dissolute aristocrat's obliviousness to the plight of the deserving poor

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<sup>8</sup> Brydges, *Le Forester, A Novel* [London, 1802], I, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Skinner Surr, *George Barnwell. A Novel* [London, 1798], II, 8-11.

<sup>10</sup> Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, I, 48.

<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Young Philosopher: A Novel* [London, 1798], III, 10-11 and n.



was simply the counterpart of the new philosopher's equally contemptible contention that the poor were always much better off than the rich since they were so much closer to the noble savagery and arcadian perfection in which all men and women ought to aspire to live.<sup>12</sup>

Amongst many individual novelists' complaints about some specific corruption of the *élite*, often serious allegations from otherwise very conservative authors<sup>13</sup>, there was a single much more widespread and straightforward method by which numerous anti-Jacobin novelists succeeded in linking the theme of a corrupt aristocracy, already well established in fiction and in moral-political discourse, with the Jacobin threat apparently posed by the Revolution and radicals in Britain. It was a technique that I have already considered in some detail, that is to say the new-philosophical quixoticism, the imprudent and often fatal attempt to introduce the lower orders to 'enlightened' political and moral thought, of which Mr Fantom had been accused by Hannah More, Mr Axiom by Elizabeth Hamilton, or Dr Sceptic by George Walker, to give just a few of the manifold examples. This use of a fictional motif (based in the quixote tradition in literature rather than any historical reality) presented a most striking critique of *élite* corruption, painting it as a transgression that could only lead to unrest amongst those evangelised by the new doctrines and either take them to the gallows or, even more worryingly, their masters, and themselves, to the guillotine. It is a point made well in *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day* (1802) in which the motive for such aristocratic new philosophy is explained not as a misguided attempt at ameliorating the lot of the poor, of which Fantom and Sceptic might be said to have been guilty, but as the product of conventional vices, namely egotism and pride. Only such patricians as could subordinate the well-being of the people to their personal vanity, the wise Benassad says, seduce the poor 'from that labour which is alone their protection and safeguard, to scenes of riot and debauchery,' and deludes them 'with hopes, which can only be fulfilled by the ruin of society, and at the expense of the most dreadful calamities, of which they must, as they are the most numerous class, be the principal partakers.'<sup>14</sup>

But the Fantom trope was only one means of explaining how *élite* corruption could drag Britain towards discord or even rebellion. Indeed, it may have been the most direct technique available, but it remained rather abnormal, for attacks on the corruption of the *élite* more typically focused on their dereliction, rather than their direct contravention, of their duty. Exactly as nabobs were guilty because they could not fulfil the requisite functions of their new station, so corrupt aristocrats also threatened unrest, and ultimately revolution, because of their failure to perform all those conciliating tasks which

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<sup>12</sup> West, *Tale of the Times*, II, 126-28.

<sup>13</sup> As examples of these attacks on *élite* corruption as a potentially revolutionary danger see, for instance, the accusations of their failure to grant preferments to deserving clergymen in Rev. William Cole's *Contradiction* [London, 1796] - a fault 'worse than even French fraternity' (pp.xiv-xv and 49), or their proclivity to remove worthy magistrates from the Commission of the Peace simply because they have cast their vote against the ministerial candidate in a general election, a grievance given prominence in Rev. Edmund Marshall's *Edmund and Eleonora: or Memoirs of the Houses of Summerfield and Gretton* [London, 1797], I, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Anon., *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day* [London, 1802], pp.109-110.

made hierarchy bearable to those at the base of the social order and provided its intrinsic justification. It was a point that was frequently made. In Charlotte Smith's *Marchmont* (1796), for instance, whilst wandering about the lands formerly owned by the Marchmonts, Althea comes across a scene of such utter poverty that she cannot 'wonder that any man should quit his paternal cottage' and desert the quiet acquiescence of the social order which his habitation of that cottage represents. She knows that while the Marchmonts had lived on their ancestral estates, 'that the voice of sorrow, that they could relieve, was never heard', whilst under the new and unfeeling, that is to say corrupt, landlords, the poor cannot obtain even 'the absolute necessities of life ... even by the most unremitting labour'. Since it is the task of the local gentry to make up the gap between what a labourer can earn by industry and what his family needs to live, she concludes, so it must be the crime of the new landlords that these labourers are deserting their cottages.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, this aristocratic negligence was so much the worse because, unlike nabobs who knew no better, genuine aristocrats deliberately withdrew from the duties which they knew were their burden. Certainly this was a lesson that Percival, in the epistolary novel that bears his name, was forever trying to instill in the restless aristocrats with whom he corresponded. Thus Miss Emma Coverley's longing for a life without the burdens of rank and fortune was given short shrift. 'For shame!' he wrote, 'you have a brilliant post assigned you' - it would be an outright sin to let any temporary 'mortification' persuade her to relinquish it.<sup>16</sup> But if Miss Coverley had resented her status because it plagued her with troublesome suitors, more often the remissness of the nobility had a less worthy motivation, and would prove more destructive. Mr Mortlock, in Pye's *Aristocrat* (1799), for example, having received a French education, had developed an unhealthy regard for all the debaucheries of the French style of aristocracy, that is to say a nobility that was all status, power and extravagance, things personally gratifying in other words, but without the duty, self-sacrifice and service to society for which the English nobleman was, says Pye, justly famous. Mortlock never considered, Pye tells us (taking the opportunity to specify what the responsibilities of rank actually were),

the different part an English gentleman, who has the important duties of legislator and magistrate to fill, must act on the theatre of life, compared with the splendid insignificance of the foreign nobility, whose sole view must be directed to shine in a court or camp.<sup>17</sup>

It was a most instructive comparison, for it revealed exactly why a decadent aristocracy posed such a threat. The stark *donnée* that lay behind Mortlock's foolish admiration for the aristocrats of France was

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<sup>15</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont: A Novel* [London, 1796] III, 61-64.

<sup>16</sup> R. C. Dallas, *Percival, or Nature Vindicated* [London, 1801], I, 310. Compare the wise Mr Brudenell's stern advice to his ward, Sophia, in West's *Infidel Father*: 'By claiming your birthright, you fulfil one of the first principles of nature; by neglecting to do it, you would, in my opinion, omit a positive duty' (II, 81).

<sup>17</sup> Henry James Pye, *The Aristocrat, a Novel* [London, 1799], I, 16.

that by the mid-'90s, when the novel was set, and 1799, when the novel was published, the majority of his quondam rôle models would no longer be alive. The Terror, and either the guillotine or forced emigration, had been the reward of their supercilious and selfish nobility. Moreover, the Revolution could be directly attributable to their corruption of the institution of nobility.

Certainly, much of the first wave of British responses to the Revolution, including those responses registered in fiction, had indicted the tyranny of the French *ancien régime*, and especially the despotism of its nobles, as the primary cause of the great rebellion of 1789-94. The French King had been misled, and his people misruled, by the corruption of the nobility, misrule which had caused such resentment that rebellion had seemed an attractive, and even understandable, option to the French people. As Mary Robinson's acute but evidently too naïve heroine, Sabina, argued in *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796), one could sympathise with the Revolution that had forced herself and her aristocratic family from Paris because it was an attempt to end the evils of the *ancien régime*: a time 'when the few were happy, and the million wretched! when virtue, valour, genius, and humanity, bowed at the foot-stool of ignorance and pride', when 'palaces rang with festivity, and dungeons groaned with victims', when 'malice or caprice ... had the power to scourge the suffering multitude, or awe them into silence', and when the throne, where a just but deluded King sat, 'was barricaded by the nobles'.<sup>18</sup> Importantly, it was not merely Sabina's, nor only Robinson's, opinion that the corruption of the French aristocracy had caused the Revolution. This was the consensus, and it was the disquieting recognition that underlay the new sense of urgency added to the campaign for the reform of the corruption of the élite in the 1790s.

Lamentably, of course, what that rebellion had achieved, as Burke explained in the *Reflections*, was only the diffusion of 'all the unhappy corruptions that usually were the disease of wealth and power' through 'all ranks of life'.<sup>19</sup> And that the Revolution had not replaced the despotism of old France with anything in the least preferable was something as obvious to all by the mid-'90s as it had been to Burke at the beginning of the decade, Henry James Pye, for instance, having one of his newly desolate French noblemen, the Count de Tourelles, realise that 'the despotism and corruption of our old government,' was both the cause and the correlative of 'the anarchy and horror, in which France is now involved.'<sup>20</sup> De Tourelles' use of despotism and corruption in the same phrase and in the same sense is illuminating. The word 'corruption', as it was often used in anti-Jacobin fiction, and as we have just heard Burke use it to signify the dangerous disease to which wealth and power was heir, could mean two things - either vice, in the traditional sense of some immoral or depraved habit, or, more specifically, political corruption, that is to say, the attempted exercise of arbitrary power. Both, in Burke's opinion, had been inherited by the new

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<sup>18</sup> Mary Robinson, *Hubert de Sevrac. A Romance of the Eighteenth Century* [1796; Dublin, 1797], II, 6-7, and see also I, 2-6 for further indictments of the *ancien régime*.

<sup>19</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. VIII, ed. L. G. Mitchell [Oxford, 1989], pp.88-89.

<sup>20</sup> Henry James Pye, *The Democrat: Interspersed with Anecdotes of Well-Known Characters* [1795; London, 1796], I, 107-108.

regime in France, and in fact, these two corruptions, vice and despotism, were generally tantamount to the same thing. Not that this was a new conjunction. Charles I and James II had often been accused, by their contemporaries and their historians, of a personal depravity concomitant with their Popery and tyranny, just as Louis XVI and, especially, Marie-Antoinette had been in the late eighteenth century. It is a conjunction that pervaded fiction too, any self-respecting villain - Ann Radcliffe's Count Montoni will serve as a typical example - acting the rôles of both tyrant and libertine. Indeed, in his *Caleb Williams* (1794), William Godwin had founded the singularity of his arch-tyrant Falkland, so vital to the author's purpose, on the premise that he was a despot, but, uniquely, without the traditionally accompanying profligacy.

There were two forms that élite corruption could take, in other words, both generally assumed to have been endemic in the French aristocracy and to have provoked the Revolution, and both of which amounted to the same thing. One was private vice, the other public tyranny, and to attack one was to attack the other. Since so much anti-Jacobin propaganda chose to image Britain's necessary course in the 1790s as the path between the Scylla of democracy, or new philosophy, and the Charybdis of arbitrary power (as Gillray had famously done in 1793<sup>21</sup>), the corruption of the élite in effect became the counterpart of, and every bit as dangerous as, democracy or new philosophy. Both promoted revolution amongst the people. Certainly, it was a contention that was evident in the work of one novelist who used Gillray's schematisation, the anonymous author of *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805), who warned of the dual threats of the nation being 'sacrificed at the shrine of some chimerical system' or, equally disastrously, 'suffering the encroachments of tyrants', or, as the author also chose to call it, being 'overwhelmed in the vortex of national corruption'.<sup>22</sup>

To examine first the exact process by which aristocratic tyranny could be held to promote rebellion, we might turn to the idiosyncratically radical magnate William Beckford, whose novel *Azemia* (1798) levelled accusations of a very public despotism at two of the most prominent conservatives of the age, Burke and Justice Ashhurst (although neither was mentioned by name). It is Bat, the servant of Beckford's hero, who points the finger at the tyrannical corruption of those aristocrats, or agents of aristocrats, who despise the poor, 'and tramples upon them, and calls 'em swine and hogs' (a reference to Burke's famous insult), and those who, like 'some Justis of the Peace up at London' (doubtlessly meaning Ashhurst, whose reactionary *Charge to the Grand Jury of the County of Middlesex* was published in numerous editions from 1792), preached 'how poor folks had no business to think; that it was a bad thing, and served only to make them lose their time'.<sup>23</sup> Fortunately for his master, Bat is a man of sense, and

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<sup>21</sup> See *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, eds. F. G. Stephens and M. D. George [11 vols., London, 1870-1954], no. 8320.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc: Containing Some Views of English and Foreign Society* [London, 1805], II, 119-20.

<sup>23</sup> J. A. M. Jenks (ie William Beckford), *Azemia, A Novel: Containing imitations of the manner, both in prose and verse, of many of the authors of the present day; with political strictures* [London, 1798], II, 74-75.



realises on his own that 'it's quite an impossible thing for all men to be rich and high alike', but this knowledge only increases his resentment at the high-handedness of those members of the ruling order who seek to take away his right to think, consigning him to the level of a brute - a dangerous thing for, as Bat points out, he 'can see plain enough, that the reason why that there Justis of Peace, or placeman, up at London, as wrote them there books, would not have poor folks *think*: - it's for fear they should find out there's no occasion for such folks as them,' the results of which realisation must be revealed by the merest glance across the Channel and perfectly demonstrate how arbitrary power could propel Britain, as it had France, into revolution.<sup>24</sup>

A novel of a year later, Mary Charlton's *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (1799), provides an equally stark warning of how, secondly, the private vices of the élite could push Britain into revolution. The reader is presented with a typically dissipated aristocrat, Lady ---, who is guilty of a fairly conventional array of profligate crimes - coquetry, gambling, ordering goods for which she is unable to pay, and inveigling her lover to forge bank-notes to extricate her from her dilemma, all of which she excuses herself for, Charlton tells us, 'because the virtues or merits of her ancestors have transmitted to her ... she claims, a right to become degraded and vicious, without feeling the keenness of that stigma which the world affixes to the humbler offender.'<sup>25</sup> Somewhat unusually, Charlton then opens the case up to discussion amongst her more sensible characters, and the political danger of such an attitude is slowly revealed. First, of course, one character, Delamare, points out that good behaviour amongst the lower orders of society can hardly be expected when the élite provide such a bad example. 'Good God!' he says, that we should wonder at, that we should dare arraign the prevalence of licentious opinions amongst the multitude, when they must be voluntarily blind, or else behold the general licentious conduct of the titled and rich - .

And Delamare goes on to elucidate the more specific reasons for the multitude's likely disgust at their supposed betters, and their shameful hypocrisy (a speech which includes a rare criticism of the zeal of the reform of manners movement):

The labourer is uncertain if he may not to-morrow, by the fury of fanatical reform, be forbidden to have his humble dinner baked on the seventh day; and if he has ever profited by the Sunday schools those very reformers of morals have so industriously propagated, he may read in an alehouse newspaper of the magnificent dinners, concerts, card parties, collations, and suppers given by his Grace, the Countess, Sir John, My Lady, and all the Right Honourable group upon the same sacred day.

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<sup>24</sup> Beckford, *Azemia*, II, 75-76. Since Beckford stressed Bat's knowledge of the inevitability, and wisdom, of hierarchy, it can safely be inferred that his condemnation of Ashhurst and other such conservatives was not based on the error of their objectives, but on the way in which they sought to delude and coerce the lower orders into submission. Beckford was conventional in little that he did, and certainly not in his political opinions, but in this conviction he was joined by many more orthodox anti-Jacobins, albeit with a little less truculence. Jane West, for instance, distinguished between the wise attempts at propitiating the poor made by one character, who 'smiled them into a persuasion that she was an angel', and of another, a 'politician of the old school' whose watchwords were 'prescription and authority', who 'chided them for their faults, traced their misfortunes to their imprudence, and instead of trying to persuade them out of their prejudices informed them that their capacities and education best fitted them for the duty of obedience.' West, *The Loyalists: an Historical Novel* [London, 1812], I, 120 and 114.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Charlton, *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences. A Novel* [London, 1799], II, 134.

Only then, however, does Delamere reveal the full, shocking implication of such double-standards, for must not disgust give way to something far more dangerous?

If the anecdotes of the great do not always redound to their credit, if the daily prints will record their follies and their vices, and if the pious promoters of learning amongst the labouring poor will enable them to prose over 'those pictures of our times', why do we stand astonished at the diffusion of levelling principles?<sup>26</sup>

No longer were the private vices of the élite merely symbolic of their political shortcomings, and no longer did their vices simply represent their dereliction of duty. Charlton had actually charted the process by which the personal corruption of the aristocracy led directly to the swelling of first contempt for the higher ranks of society, and then, possibly, the determination to overthrow them. It was an easy matter to read this process into the development of the Revolution in France, to see an aristocracy famous for their devotion to fashion, for their loose morals, as well as for their political tyranny, failing in the duties incumbent upon them as the social élite, arousing well-merited disgust at their hypocritical behaviour, and therefore bringing revolution upon their own heads. The most chastening thought was that it could happen, likewise, in Britain. In France, the Revolution had come about because aristocracy there had been hollow, serving no useful purpose in French society and operating only so as to oppress and offend the people, and ultimately to drive them to the point of rebellion. Since theirs was an aristocracy that was respected not for the benefits that it conferred on society, it no longer had any purpose that could argue against the Revolution. Thus the great danger to which many anti-Jacobins were seeking to alert the nation was that if the élites who headed Britain's social hierarchy did not create their own *raison d'être* from their behaviour, then a similar fate must befall them as had befallen their French counterparts. Anti-Jacobinism had its own very pressing reasons for attacking the corruption of the élite. The conservative campaign against the corruption of the great in the '90s and early 1800s was neither the mere puppet of the Evangelical movement, used to add respectability to their attack on the aristocracy, nor was it simply the continuation of a reform movement well under way for several years before the French Revolution broke. It was instead a cogent and vital part of the conservative campaign to protect Britain from the danger of Revolution.

## ***2 Reproving corruption but defending the status quo***

The anti-Jacobin campaign to expose the corruption of the élite, of course, was not a remedy for rebellion as it already existed in the country, but rather a course of preventative medicine designed to eradicate the causes of the disease. It was, though, a treatment that was not without risk to the patient - the nation and

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<sup>26</sup> Charlton, *Rosella*, II, 138-40.

its social hierarchies - since in pointing out the degeneracy of the aristocracy, those who campaigned for the reform of the élite, and especially the novelists with their (supposedly) large and unsophisticated readership, could well be accused of simply providing ammunition for those who condemned the *status quo*, of adding grist to the levellers' mills. The scathing attacks launched on the behaviour of the aristocracy in the most orthodox of conservative fiction, in the novels of Jane West or Elizabeth Hamilton say, was, on the surface at least, as subversive as the depictions of ignorant peers, foolishly and weakly attacking the Revolution in a radical novel like *Desmond* (1792), for which Charlotte Smith subsequently felt it necessary to apologise, or, for that matter, the assaults on the current government of Britain that were to be found in any of the classically 'Jacobin' novels of the early or mid-'90s. If one bad aristocrat could be enough to raise popular dissent against the whole class, which was the very point these Evangelical anti-Jacobins were making, then so might their own depiction of those vices. Did these literary 'Saints', in other words, and as Gerald Newman has suggested, do 'much more to subvert the established order than to uphold it'?<sup>27</sup>

Certainly, authors such as West were not unaware of the tight-rope they were walking, and took care to avoid any imputation that they were compromising their political orthodoxy, and propelling the nation into jeopardy, by pursuing too vigorously their Evangelical agenda. It was West herself who included a 'Legendary Tale' in her *Gossip's Story* (1796) with a moral that, she pointedly submitted, 'may recommend it to the few, who still love to see nobility clad in the respectable robe of virtue; and eminent rank described in unison with dignified sentiments and generous actions.'<sup>28</sup> And it is in this same cause, that, this time without regressing to some former mystical age when nobles were truly noble, she had the wise Mr Brudenell explain her theory of aristocracy, reassuring the virtuous Sophia, who has evidently been reading some Evangelical attack on the manners of the élite, that she would not necessarily find all the aristocracy to be corrupt:

The beings that you have described are indeed oftener found in high life than in the lower orders of society. It is their sphere, their proper place of action; and we should no more wonder at their germinating there, than at finding shrews at Billingsgate, or pick-pockets at St. Giles's. But remember, Sophia, the rich soil that gives birth to these *fungi* also brings forth the most choice productions. If you are often annoyed by knaves and fools in ermine, you will frequently find more polished manners, more enlightened views, and, let me add, superior dignity of character, and sterling worth. ... No object is more grateful to the reflecting mind, than a good man irradiating the ample sphere of greatness.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Newman, *Rise of English Nationalism*, p.235.

<sup>28</sup> West, *A Gossip's Story, and a Legendary Tale* [1796; London, 1798], I, 116.

<sup>29</sup> 'Beware, Sophia,' West has Brudenell continue, 'of yielding to the common error of these querulous times. It is now the aim of too many popular writers, to feast the spleen of the lower orders, by exhibiting most degrading and false pictures of the superior classes.' As it happens, Sophia was right to fear Lord Glanville, for he is the 'Infidel Father' of the novel's title, which makes West's caution seem a warning directed against no-one more than herself. West, *Infidel Father*, II, 67-68.

This last phrase, of course, points at the conventional justifications of rank with which we are already familiar, but the question that West is forcing herself to confront is that of how the acknowledged utility, and abstract moral rectitude, of the aristocracy, and the *status quo* which they represent, is to be reconciled with the lapses, not to say outright wickedness, of many of its members.

West's attempt to resolve the paradox simply by pointing out that some individual aristocrats might be corrupt, but the majority were not, was not a wholly satisfactory solution for other authors. Other attempted answers may not have been much more sophisticated, but they did propose a means of distinguishing between the corrupt and the pure which did not simply talk of a minority which did not outweigh the majority. Charles Douglas, hero of Robert Bisset's first novel, for example, came up with the following formula when his animadversions against two manifestly iniquitous aristocrats, Sir Duncan Dismal and the Earl of Rackrent, provoked the former to question 'Are you a leveller'. Bisset evidently deemed Charles' answer important enough to merit all the emphasis the printer could muster:

Far from it; I respect the peerage as AN ORDER INDISPENSABLY NECESSARY FOR THE BALANCE OF THE CONSTITUTION, but that is in their corporate, not their individual capacity. *Individuals whether peers or commons*, I respect in proportion to THEIR WISDOM AND THEIR VIRTUES, and wish to associate with them, or not, according as I find their manners, habits, situations...<sup>30</sup>

Should any reader have missed the point here, a practical illustration is soon forthcoming, Bisset inviting his readers to make the acquaintance of a repugnant Duke whom Charles' once radical friend Wilson introduces as 'one of the instances from which I used to infer the inefficacy of the peerage to legislative and judicative purposes', only for Charles to explain the folly of such a conclusion:

I will grant that there are others of the peerage besides old Quondam, whose pursuits are frivolous and despicable, and whose character is insignificant, and, notwithstanding their rank, ridiculous, and even contemptible; but peers, as an ORDER, are of the highest consequence to the balance of the constitution, and are aggregately good lawgivers, because the laws which they propose, or adopt, are aggregately beneficial; and are good judges, as their sentences are aggregately just. The nature of the institution renders it impossible that there should not be fools or fribbles among them, but, as a body, they act wisely and equitably.<sup>31</sup>

But even this did not represent the full resolution of the question, for something approaching a hard and fast rule is deducible not only from Bisset's, but from the entire anti-Jacobin canon's attempts to reconcile individual aristocratic corruption with the absolute necessity and positive virtue of the *élite* as a whole. This rule was founded on the division of all questions of the competency of governors or the rectitude of the *status quo* into institutions and manners. This is not to say, of course, that all novelists consciously or explicitly made such a distinction, but the fundamental differentiation between the structures upon which society was based, those infrastructural organisations such as the Church, the

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<sup>30</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, III, 74.

<sup>31</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, III, 118-19.



constitution or the law, all neutral in themselves, and the individuals whose manners, whose behaviour, dictated the operation of those institutions, did underlay their work and is frequently very visible. Certainly in the case of the degeneracy of the élite it is a distinction that is always very apparent, the institution of aristocracy being sacrosanct, pure and uncorrupted in itself, but the manners of the individuals who together composed that order being often the most corrupt, something which, as we have seen, the novels of the '90s displayed great relish in exhibiting. Crucially, it was essential that this criticism of manners was not allowed to depreciate the intrinsic value of the institution of hierarchy and thus persuade the foolish and the rash that the order of aristocracy itself warranted amendment or even annulment. Such a move could only end in disaster, as, manifestly, had been the case in France. There, as had become obvious, the Revolutionaries had made the fatal mistake of attempting to overthrow the entirety of the old order and the institutions - the monarchy, the aristocracy, the clergy, even the judiciary - upon which it had for generations rested.

Bisset's analysis of the élite's corruption had already come close to proposing such a division between institutions and manners, but he too could be more lucid on the subject when giving his consideration to the causes of the Revolution in France. Charles, his hero, 'allowed that the old government of France had been very deficient in many of the constituents of just and beneficial polity,' but he absolutely refused to accept that this had been due to the institutions of the *ancien régime* and doubted whether 'the evils ascribed to the government were not owing to the manners of the people'.<sup>32</sup> Of course, in drawing this distinction, Bisset was drawing heavily on his great mentor, Burke, and his insistence that 'Manners are more important than laws'. But whereas Burke had consistently seen the Revolution in France as most terrifying because it was 'a revolution in sentiments, manners and moral opinions', this was not an opinion generally advanced by novelists who preferred to understand revolution as an assault on institutions.<sup>33</sup>

To most, the French Revolution was an attack on all the old institutions of state and society, and an attack that, by destroying those institutions, had unleashed the personal depravities of the people in the way that Burke bemoaned. But anti-Jacobin novelists were also intent on demonstrating that only Jacobins would propose changes - the dangerous innovations about which Burke was so concerned - to the institutions of Britain. Jane West, for instance, in her *Tale of the Times* presented the Jacobin Fitzosbourne frequently giving voice to the most extreme folly, or perhaps iniquity, by 'expatiating upon the folly of legislators, in not accommodating institutions to the varying humours of the people whom they meant to control'.<sup>34</sup> Not only was he suggesting that institutions should be tailored to manners, but,

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<sup>32</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, II, 54.

<sup>33</sup> Edmund Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace* in *The Works of Edmund Burke* [London, 1854-56], ed. Bohn, V, 208; and *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in *Writings and Speeches*, VIII, 131.

<sup>34</sup> West, *Tale of the Times*, III, 18.

since it was a relaxation of the divorce laws he had in mind, it was the corruptest of manners which he thought should form the basis of the constitution. West meant this to appear manifestly wrong, but it is really Fitzosbourne's failure to appreciate the inviolate nature of all institutions that fits the pattern of anti-Jacobin fiction. Henry James Pye, for instance, provides two alternative readings of an incident in his *Democrat* in which the Jacobin Le Noir wakes after a night of drinking to find himself 'having received a guinea in earnest, to serve his majesty as a soldier' but is subsequently released from his bond by the kindly Justice of the Peace before whom he is taken to attest his enlistment. On the one hand, Pye himself expresses the opinion that Le Noir should have been grateful for having been 'so protected by the laws of a country, against an outrage committed by persons employed in the government, and that outrage punished.' But instead, Pye records, his anti-hero 'was only confirmed in his opinion, of the abuses existing in the English laws and constitution, because they had not prevented a disaster, which', Pye cannot resist adding, 'was solely occasioned by his own folly and intemperance.'<sup>35</sup> In other words, whilst Pye, and all right-thinking Britons, commended the laws, or rather the judicial process, as they operated in practice, the Jacobin Le Noir maintains that the institutions of the state are at fault and in need of overhauling.

This is not to say, of course, that anti-Jacobin novelists presented Britain as a perfect society suffering from no ills. Pye condemned press-ganging and, as we have seen, the corruption of the élite was the constant subject of some of the most reactionary novelists' pens. Such corruption could bring even an author like Brydges to the brink of arraigning the institutions of the nation ('When I see these things, I am sometimes on the verge of losing my admiration for that glorious constitution', he fumed when contemplating the decline in status of the aristocracy<sup>36</sup>), but the essential point which the anti-Jacobins hoped to impart was that these were abuses, not institutional, but the product of corrupt individuals. Indeed, whatever the specific context, it was a point that was continually being made by anti-Jacobin authors. 'Happy would it be, at this hour, for the British empire,' wrote the author of *The Chances* in 1803, simply demanding that the aristocracy fulfil the duties which might justly be expected of their rank, 'if the boasted descendants of some of her worthies, reflected equal honour upon the stock from whence they spring.'<sup>37</sup> Ending her historical novel of the seventeenth century, Jane West made the same point, but in relation to the corruption of the Church, exhorting her readers not to 'confound the mistakes of her governors, or the faults of her officials, with the essentials of her institutions', and, speaking of a much more modern concern, the author of *Such Follies Are* of 1795 could contend that it was only the manners of the electorate that gave rise to demands for changes to the electoral system, for 'were the whole body of

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<sup>35</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, II, 65-69.

<sup>36</sup> Brydges, *Le Forester*, III, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Anon. ('A Disciple of the Old School'), *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School: A Novel* [London, 1803], II, 28.

Electors' as 'conscientiously scrupulous' as his or her hero, 'we should have no cause to ask for a Parliamentary Reform.'<sup>38</sup>

In the midst of the Revolution crisis, it was clearly not the least perilous of strategies even to suggest in a novel the possibility of the need for a reform of Parliament, and this should suggest one reason why authors were so assiduous in stressing that they wholeheartedly accepted the hallowed status of the nation's institutions. Their acknowledgements of the absolute probity and necessity of these institutions was a concession to orthodoxy, a statement of an overt anti-Jacobin rectitude which they hoped might protect them from any accusations of radicalism. It is a technique quite flagrantly adopted in *Such Follies Are*, which kicks off with the rather seditious allegation that Britain's Poor Laws ensure that 'the condition of vassalage seems not utterly extinct among us' since the revenue set aside for the support of the poor was often subject to the depredations of those charged with distributing it, but goes on to chart the reform of this abuse by the goodly Mr Hanbury who, without attempting to alter the operation of the Poor Laws themselves, 'soon placed matters on a more eligible footing, and rendered the condition of many poor families more worthy of the ample provision which the humanity of our laws provides for them'. And should it not be clear enough that the legislation in itself was good, but only its former operation corrupt, Hanbury specifically points out that 'our laws are equitable,' even if 'justice is not always accessible to the friendless and poor.'<sup>39</sup> It was a technique adopted even more brazenly, and probably more needfully, by Charlotte Smith too, whose habitual attacks on the law, motivated (as she frequently admitted) by her personal circumstances, coupled with her reputation as a Jacobin, would surely have turned a taint of democracy into an indelible stain had it not been for the appeasing riders with which she always accompanied them. The legal villainy that she detailed in *Marchmont* (1796), for instance, took place in 'a country celebrated for its equal laws', was clearly 'the abuse of those laws' and 'entirely illegal', was 'the abuse of the laws of the best governed of all possible communities', and left her wondering 'why the best of all possible laws are often abused'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> West, *Loyalists*, III, 346-47; Anon., *Such Follies Are: A Novel* [London, 1795], I, 137-38.

<sup>39</sup> Anon., *Such Follies Are*, I, 30-31, 63 and 123.

<sup>40</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont: A Novel* [London, 1796], II, 100, 214-15 and III, 29. Only once does Smith come close to condemning the laws themselves, and even then she accompanies her complaint with all the usual propitiating rhetoric and, finally, pulls up short of any outright statement of her desire for their alteration. *Marchmont* tells of how he has been driven from his native land - 'which every Englishman, is taught to love and venerate as soon as he can lisp its name' - by an attorney - 'who lives in the constant violation of those laws which are the boast and glory of Britons' - but which - 'by some strange abuse' - he is able to bend to his use. For this glaring defect, he continues, 'there is, it seems, no remedy! - None! - for nothing must be changed; and though individuals among the majority of villains who plunder under the masks of attorneys are now and then punished, no radical cure can be administered to the mass of this crying evil - for it may be injurious to the sanctity of the laws. - Oh! never then let such laws be boasted of!' (IV, 39-40) Interestingly, that most complete member of the Establishment, Henry James Pye, appeared to share Smith's opinion about the corruptibility of the laws and its agents (as, of course, would numerous other novelists come to do, notably Dickens), and he uses exactly the sort of language which runs through her novels, having one of his characters exclaim that 'the hands of the selfish and the cunning, often convert the noblest fabric of jurisprudence in the world into a system of iniquity.' Pye, *The Aristocrat*, II, 95.

It might also be suggested that George Walker, who, before his incarnation as the most energetic of anti-Jacobins with his *Vagabond* of 1799, attempted a novel in the manner of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, deliberately used this gap between institutions and manners to allow his retreat from his mentor's radicalism. Whilst Caleb was prepared to rebel against any and all of the institutions of the degenerate society which conspired to persecute him, the eponymous hero of *Theodore Cyphon; or, the Benevolent Jew* (1796), whilst locked away in a private madhouse (as potent a symbol of the degeneracy of the nation as was available to novelists), took time to consider exactly what it was that he ought to be resisting. The conclusions of his reflections, which take the rather modish form of a consideration of the origins of civil society, are unambiguous (if still a little radical) - it is not the institutions of society that are at fault, but the individuals whose vices corrupt them:

I placed myself at the commencement of society. I formed laws, and traced up consequences; but I found in all the weakness of human nature, concluding with Solomon, that nothing was perfect beneath the sun. I compared the monarchical with the republican, the oligarchical with the representative; and I found that in the administration of either, but one thing was wanting to render each a blessing to the people, and that was, men of integrity and virtue; without this, the one only differed from the other by a line in the scale of oppression.<sup>41</sup>

Simply to have considered a republican or representative government might have indicted Theodore as a Jacobin in the suspicious climate of the mid-'90s, but the differentiation he was making between the theory and practice of government, since it illustrated how pointless any revolution would be while the same corrupted manners continued to prevail, was as sure a way to forestall sedition as the much more deliberate anti-Jacobinism which Walker would later attempt.

Even if authors, in a number of cases, were using their endorsement of the inviolability of institutions to surround themselves with a cloak of political propriety, it was a tactic which should not be allowed to diminish the centrality of the distinction between manners and institutions to anti-Jacobinism. Nor do such attempts to appease a feared anti-Jacobin inquisition comprise the whole picture, for there were numerous novelists who attempted to expose the gap between institutions and manners not as a defensive mechanism, but in order to suggest a means of bridging it. Such an author was Elizabeth Hamilton, whose *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) constitutes probably the fullest and most sophisticated treatment of the divide between institutions and manners as well as containing suggestions for the emendation of the abuses to which British society was prey without in any way eroding the vital institutional pillars of that society. Hamilton's novel is in two parts, and although its engaging prose seldom gives the impression of being rigidly schematised, it is not an over-simplification to distinguish between the first volume as a survey of the theoretically perfect institutions of Britain, and the second, as an investigation into the manners which are, in reality, to be found there. The eponymous Rajah Zaarmilla acts as linchpin, for it is he who, in volume one, receives information about Britain from

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<sup>41</sup> George Walker, *Theodore Cyphon; or, the Benevolent Jew. A Novel* [1796; London, 1823], I, 263-64.



Captain Percy, an idealist who describes his native land's theoretical perfections, and then from the Brahmin Sheermaal, who has already visited Britain and can consequently add a more sceptical gloss to Percy's optimism. His cynicism paves the way for the events of volume two, in which Zaarmilla journeys to Britain only to discover for himself the deplorable corruption of all the institutions which he had been taught to venerate whilst still in India.

To start with, for instance, Percy teaches Zaarmilla that there are no castes in Britain, with honours being bestowed according to merit, that all Members of Parliament are uninfluenced by the fervour of party, and act without avarice or ambition, that all Christians are free to attach themselves to whichever sect they wish, without having their liberties infringed, that vice and folly do not exist at the universities, and that women are treated as rational beings, with souls just as valuable as those of men. He learns of the Christianity which, Percy tells him, informs all the actions of the British from their daily behaviour to their government and colonial policy, and, believing every word of it, he congratulates the British on their virtue:

Benevolent people of England! it is their desire, that all should be partakers of the same blessings of liberty, which they themselves enjoy. It was doubtless with this glorious view, that they sent forth colonies to enlighten, and instruct, the vast regions of America. To disseminate the love of virtue and freedom, they cultivated the trans-Atlantic isles: and to rescue *our* nation from the hands of the oppressor, did this brave, and generous people visit the shores of Hindostan!<sup>42</sup>

Of course, such utopianism makes for potent, and chastening, irony even if it is allowed to stand alone like this. But it is an effect that Hamilton remorselessly cultivates as she has the Rajah discover for himself the error of his convictions. Surely, writes Sheermaal to Zaarmilla, 'if such a *Shaster*' (a book of scriptures) as Percy had spoken of '*ever did exist*, it is now become altogether *obsolete*, and entirely unknown', for, he continues, 'the only devotion known to the majority of the community is the Poojah of cards and partridges', with the population of Britain being divided into castes as strict as those of India, namely 'People of Family', 'People of no Family' and 'People of Style'.<sup>43</sup>

It is in this use of her comparative technique, though, that we find the real aim and achievement of Hamilton's satire, for she aspires not merely to demonstrate the breadth of the gap that had developed between Britain as she ought to be and Britain as she was, but attempts to point out the means, in the individual cases which she details, for the rectification of these abuses by a return to the institutions which Zaarmilla has already had explained to him, and which underpins his understanding of what he sees. The Rajah, in other words, perhaps somewhat naïvely continuing to abide by his pre-existing respect for British institutions, is not the typical ingénue of the Lesage-inspired picaresque satirical novel, but is a walking reproof to British corruption and an appeal, in human shape, to the corrupt to return to the

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<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah; Written Previous To, and During the Period of his Residence in England* [1796; London, 1801], I, 21-29 and 20.

<sup>43</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, I, 127 and 117.

original principles enshrined in those institutions. It is a dual function that is apparent, for instance, when Zaarmilla attends an Easter service in a London church. 'Instead of behaving in this temple, as if they had assembled together to send up their united tribute of praise, thanksgiving, and humble supplication, to the Most High,' he writes, detailing what he knows to be the theoretical meaning of their gathering, 'so successfully did they affect the concealment of their devotional sentiments, that no one would have suspected they had met together for any other purpose, but that of staring at each other's dress!'<sup>44</sup> Zaarmilla recognises that the outward show, the signifiers, of religion have become dislocated from their real meaning, what they were meant to signify, but such is his admiration for the original institutions that he cannot conceive of a society which would be so foolish as to have deserted them. This naïvety, this inability to imagine why anyone would wantonly depart from the perfect institutions of British society, can only chasten those who are reading his letters and who, being better versed in the sad corruption of the day, can recognise this divergence from first principles only too well.

Clearly, what Hamilton was demanding, a demand that was actually implicit in the structure of her novel, was a reform of manners which would allow society to return to the perfect and pure institutions upon which it ought to be based, the absolute rectitude of which the reader (necessarily sharing Zaarmilla's privileged knowledge of them and confidence in them) could not doubt. It was a lesson which Hamilton applied to all British institutions, and to all those whose manners had perverted them, whether in a spiritual or temporal sphere, for just as the manners of those who attended Church had corrupted the original principles of religion, so the behaviour of Sir Caprice Ardent or Dr Sceptic had degraded the true purpose of the squirearchy and gentry. To a certain extent, Hamilton's campaign ran parallel with that of the Evangelical reform of manners movement, and that Hamilton herself clearly had some sympathy, if not direct connections, with the 'Saints' is evident from her attacks on those members of the élite who possess merely the outward show of religion or allow their own folly to corrupt their social inferiors. Yet to suggest, as Gerald Newman has done, that the reform of manners campaign, to which Hamilton was clearly contributing, was '*an extremely radical process*' which was merely '*working under cover of an extremely conservative one*' is, at least as far as these novels were concerned, manifestly wrong.<sup>45</sup> In Hamilton's fiction, and in the rest of the novels under discussion here, both anti-Jacobin and Evangelical aims were inextricably bound up together, the campaign of the latter, indeed, being put forward as a means to the former.

In fact, Hamilton's notion of the necessity of the reform of manners, but without any meddling with institutions, relied just as much on Burke as on any more spiritual programme. Certainly, the insistence that there ought to be no sudden or far-reaching change to the structure of society or the state was at root a notion straight out of the *Reflections*. Burke's retrospective consideration of the correct

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<sup>44</sup> Hamilton, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, II, 63.

<sup>45</sup> Newman, *Rise of English Nationalism*, p.235. Emphasis *sic*.

procedure for removing a tyrannical monarch, as had been necessary in 1688, might have served as a pattern for the solution to the anti-Jacobins' problem of how to confront the corruption endemic in British society without undermining its sacrosanct fabric. Those who had constructed the 1688 Revolution, according to him, might have deviated a little from the straight line of succession, but had 'kept the principle' and 'shewed that they held it inviolable'.<sup>46</sup> Thomas Surr's reformed Jacobin Mr Mental, for one, might well have been reading Burke, for his new philosophy had been replaced by the realisation that 'a *slow* and *gradual* removal of the veil of prejudices', and not any sudden or, above all, institutional change, was all that ought to be wished for, since any structural alteration 'must necessarily produce effects, the very opposite to those intended by the benevolence of true philosophers'.<sup>47</sup> It was a lesson that was painfully obvious to a French aristocrat such as Pye's Count De Tourelles, who admitted, too late, to his British friends that 'By returning to the original principles of our constitution, we should have found materials to form, and foundations to bear, a fabrick as beautiful and as permanent as your own'.<sup>48</sup>

But De Tourelles was being too flattering, for the British constitution might have been beautiful and permanent, but the corruption of the individuals who abused it was in danger of provoking a revolution in Britain in exactly the same way as had happened in France. It was therefore not enough for Mr Mental merely to repudiate his former new philosophy, for the nation's corruption would just as surely lead to Jacobinism as it destroyed the very *raison d'être* of the hierarchies and institutions which maintained her stability, harmony and prosperity. Mental may have regretted, as he said, 'having published some strong truths, which have unsettled many minds', but equally, if not more, important was his recognition 'that REFORMATION is much better adapted to the purposes of philanthropy than the best planned REVOLUTION'.<sup>49</sup> Neither Mental nor Surr themselves were members of any Evangelical lobby, but what they had recognised, along with Hamilton and the 'Saints', was that the reformation of the nation would have to take place on a private and personal level, only aggregately contributing to the safeguarding of the commonwealth. It was a realisation that lay at the root of anti-Jacobin fiction and, as well as being a process which could be effortlessly covered in fiction, which almost always dealt with the histories of individuals, the recognition of an individual's errors and the emendation of them contrasted neatly with the supposedly Jacobin belief in the perfectibility of man and their attempts to strive, as a species, for a new and better society. It was a contrast drawn out in *George Barnwell*, in which Surr advised his wayward hero to confess his errors, for, as he put it, the 'imperfections of human nature' was a noble and necessary theme, whilst 'those poor disciples of modern philosophy, who boast the reverse',

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<sup>46</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 72.

<sup>47</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, III, 68.

<sup>48</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, I, 89.

<sup>49</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, III, 68-69.

those who live in a visionary world where perfectibility is a possibility, were only fit to be pitied and reproved.<sup>50</sup> Hamilton too, in the *Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808), insisted that national pride should never be of the sort which deemed the nation to have reached perfection or which jealously rejected all criticism, but rather, ought to infuse each citizen with a sense of their individual duty to acknowledge their nation's faults, and to endeavour to reform them - as her Mrs Mason would spend the course of the novel doing.<sup>51</sup>

However, the clearest statement of the anti-Jacobin novelists' faith in a quasi-Evangelical campaign of personal reform, and its contrast with the Jacobin strategy of institutional innovation, is to be found in Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* (1798). Lloyd too was no Evangelical, but nevertheless had his mouthpiece character, Charles Maurice, react to the Jacobin D'Oyley's 'very sanguinary wishes with regard to the present ministers and governors of this country' not with anti-Jacobin bombast, but with the opinion 'that the evil lies deeper than you imagine', adding that the 'whole mass is tainted with corruption,' and 'with corruption it ever will be tainted while each man has a selfish and individual aim in society.'<sup>52</sup> The solution, as we would expect, is the reform, by individuals, of their manners, as Charles explains:

I would exactly reverse the method of our modern democrats, who (neglecting the vineyard of their own hearts) are always attacking bodies of men, yet even avoid wrestling with human nature itself; who are perpetually declaiming for reform, yet indulge in their own persons all those vices and passions which make aristocratical institutions so eminently necessary.

And indeed, his faith in this reform, and scorn for any attempt to alter the institutions which underlie society, extends almost to the point at which he must be suspected of a peculiar kind of radicalism himself. 'Equality of rights!' he jeers,

do not amuse yourself with a mere phrase! We come into contact with the institutions of our country but seldom. It imports little whether in a criminal process I and the neighbouring Lord be tried by the same laws, and allowed the same privilege of Jury.

But notwithstanding this curious outburst, Charles' general position remains clear: 'I would adopt a principle of political non-resistance', he concludes, 'I would recommend to each man in his particular sphere (first disciplining his own habits) to introduce moral reform,' and 'I would desist from meddling with political bodies' and conform 'to a system of complete passiveness'.<sup>53</sup>

Almost without exception, this was also the position of the anti-Jacobin novelists, even those who would never show any other affinity to the Evangelical cause or any organised campaign for the reform of manners. Personal reformation, it seemed, could remove any corruption in Britain. If a county constituency needed rescuing from 'the indignity of becoming a mere ministerial borough', for instance, as

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<sup>50</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, II, 167.

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Cottagers of Glenburnie: A Tale for the Farmer's Ingle-Nook* [Edinburgh, 1808], p.vi.

<sup>52</sup> Charles Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver* [Bristol, 1798], I, 178.

<sup>53</sup> Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, I, 183-84, 181-82 and 184-85.



it did in Edmund Marshall's *Edmund and Eleonora* (1797), it would be achieved not by an alteration to the constitution which permitted the sort of bribery and coercion which might allow this to happen, but by the personal reformation of the Member of Parliament who had seemed likely to fall into the corrupt web of the 'proud and haughty Minister'.<sup>54</sup> If, as in Alethea Lewis' *Plain Sense* (1796), a tyrannical husband was persecuting his wife, it was, Lewis insisted, an abuse which could be rectified only by his personal emendation, not any revision of the institution of matrimony.<sup>55</sup> If the children are to be reared so that they might redeem the sins of their parents' generation, then it is those parents who must individually reform, the mother's vanity and frivolity giving place 'to the most constant attention to her duty as a mother and wife', as in Charlotte Smith's *Wanderings of Warwick* (1794), and the father's fashionable dissipation and gambling giving way to the conviction that his highest task was to be 'the Steward to my two Boys'.<sup>56</sup> And, perhaps most important of all, if revolution was not to strike Britain, then it would be personal virtue, and especially the virtue of that élite which had been in need of the most thorough reformation, which would protect the nation. Just as personal vice both equated with and actually precipitated public profligacy, and perhaps rebellion, so personal virtue equated with, and would ensure, public morality and subordination. 'Whatever Revolutions happen in the World,' the hero of Ann Thomas' novel writes, signing a letter, 'you may always depend on the unalterable Friendship of ... Adolphus de Biron' - a style of signing-off which explicitly links his personal and public loyalty. Indeed, Thomas' assurance that his personal constancy will be the basis for the public fidelity that will forestall revolution culminates in her conclusion to her novel, a novel which has taken the Revolution in France as its central theme, which warns Britons not of the need for any political rectitude nor religious probity, but asks simply but determinedly that they be wary of degenerating into licentiousness and vice.<sup>57</sup>

We have seen, then, the three threats that novelists chose to highlight as the great dangers facing Britain during the Revolution crisis, the three threats which, for them, largely constituted that crisis. It was straightforward to reprehend and to call for the repression of both levelling and nabobism, but it was the third danger, the corruption of the élite which posed the novelists, and indeed all anti-Jacobins, a serious problem. Such degenerate aristocrats threatened revolution every bit as much as levellers and nabobs could do, since in not fulfilling the duties incumbent upon them by virtue of their station they

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<sup>54</sup> Marshall's *Edmund and Eleonora*, I, 229, 264-68 and 311.

<sup>55</sup> Alethea Lewis, *Plain Sense. A Novel* [London, 1796], II, 228. Lewis also makes it clear that this tyrannical husband, a baronet, is guilty of relying overmuch on the institutions of the nation, the Poor Laws in this case, without considering that it is the élite are obliged to go further in the performance of their duties to the poor. 'What distresses are those that the Poor Laws do not amply provide for', he asks, adding that 'There is no other country in Europe where there is such provision made for the poor, by the laws, as in England; no country that can vie with it in public institutions for the relief of all kinds of misery; I approve of all this, but having contributed my part to those institutions I have done enough; I have done what I can afford, and private charities I am convinced are only the nourishers of idleness and the dupes of impositions' (II, 68-69).

<sup>56</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Wanderings of Warwick* [London, 1794], pp.287-88.

<sup>57</sup> Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel. Founded on the French Revolution* [Plymouth, 1795?], I, 13 and II, 194.

deprived the hierarchies of the nation of their very *raison d'être* and therefore of their sustainability. But unreservedly to attack the élite would have been almost tantamount to levelling, a point confirmed by the vituperation lavished on the so-called 'Methodists' in the Clapham Sect by the likes of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* or by some sections of the Established clergy in the late '90s and early 1800s. The solution arrived at in the novels was to separate institutions from manners, to attack, and demand the reform of, the manners of the élite, or of clergymen, or lawyers or politicians or husbands, while defending the institutions of aristocracy, of the Church, of the law, of government, or of matrimony. And always, it was to be a reform that was to be achieved on a personal level, not by any attempt at the wholesale emendation of an entire organisation. Thus it is that some novelists can appear to have been making what seem revolutionary attacks on some of the most sacred areas of British society and state, and yet retain an untarnished conservatism. Their support for the institutions they appeared to be attacking remained indubitable, and, indeed, it was only their absolute faith in the rectitude and utility of those institutions which drove them so vigorously to seek their reformation.

### 3 *Natural Aristocracy*

As well as thinking themselves compelled to tread a fine line between a potentially Jacobin criticism of the pillars of the British Establishment and a demand for their reform, anti-Jacobin novelists faced a second, related dilemma. Bearing in mind the corruption amongst the élite that many of them felt themselves duty-bound to expose, they were anxious to demonstrate that the worth of an individual did not always have to be merely concomitant with his or her ostensible rank in society, yet at the same time they were aware of the necessity of showing that rank was always worthy of respect and the hierarchy which it represented worthy of utter endorsement and allegiance. Essentially, this was a dilemma that could be refined into a simple question - was rank inherently worthy of respect, or was that respect something which had to be earned - but it was a question to which there could be no equally simple and satisfactory answer. If, on the one hand, the aristocracy had to merit their respect, then what would happen to those who had failed to do so? Presumably it would not be necessary to submit to those who had manifestly betrayed their trust as nobles, and yet, of course, such a conclusion would undermine the whole fabric of the hierarchy. If, on the other hand, the nobility did not have to earn their rank, their mere rank meriting submission, then tyranny must threaten, and when the obedience of the people rested on nothing more than their presumed duty to submit unquestioningly, then, as events in France appeared to prove, rebellion would seem a viable and tempting course. Both these alarming scenarios were often dramatised in the novels.

In spite of this difficulty, Burke and the conservatives who followed him had come down quite clearly on the latter interpretation, contending that aristocracy was something inviolable, that could not,

with any legitimacy or safety, be challenged. Of course, there were still corrupt men in possession of high rank or otherwise in authority, but in essence, conservative thought held that aristocracy was not continually required to earn the respect theoretically due to it because it had already done so in some pseudo-mythical past, a past in which the best of mankind had putatively earned themselves positions of power and consequence in society, their rank being gradually cemented as future generations of their families exhibited that same worthiness and slowly institutionalised their status. There had once been a level playing field, as it were, and if it no longer existed, it was of little consequence, for those who merited high rank had already achieved their due prominence (although, as Burke was careful to insist, there did remain at least the theoretical opportunity for men of worth, but without rank - such as himself - to achieve positions of influence, albeit generally by the benevolent patronage of those already in power).

Thus it was that Burke could derive his idea of a 'natural aristocracy', as he called it in his *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), from the pragmatic advantages enjoyed by this aristocracy - arising from their leisure for reflection and action, their habituation to decision-making and command, their disinterestedness, and so on - but more fundamentally premising it on their historically sanctioned right to their rank. Indeed, such a right to nobility had to be asserted alongside its pragmatic advantages since it was only this right that could determine that these individuals were the fittest persons to enjoy the education, affluence and respect which qualified them for their leading rôles.<sup>58</sup>

Certainly, there were a number of novelists prepared to agree with Burke, tacitly at least, that worth was indeed implicit in rank by virtue of its inheritability from generation to generation. In *The Priory of St. Bernard* (1786), for example, the aristocratic heroes and heroines conventionally pair off together, live happily, and 'at their deaths, in a good old age, left heirs to inherit their *titles and virtues*' - the implication being that the latter went hand in hand with the former.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, in what was perhaps the most popular novel of the '90s, Regina Maria Roche's *Children of the Abbey* (1796), the last lines reveal that the qualities which we have watched our aristocratic protagonists display over the novel's four volumes are those for which their forebears had been noted as well as those which the children of their carefully engineered unions would most surely come to possess. 'Their virtues have added to the renown of their ancestors, and entailed peace upon their own souls', we are told, and 'their children, by all connected with them, are considered as blessings'.<sup>60</sup> Even Roche's language endorses Burke's notion of the constitution, of 'all we possess' indeed, being an '*entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, in Consequence of Some Late Discussions in Parliament, relative to the 'Reflections on the French Revolution'* [London, 1791], pp.129-30.

<sup>59</sup> M. Harley [?], *Priory of St. Bernard; an Old English Tale... Being the First Literary Production of a Young Lady* [1786; New York, 1977], II, 176.

<sup>60</sup> Regina Maria Roche, *The Children of the Abbey. A Tale* [London, 1796], IV, 305-306.

<sup>61</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 81 and 83.

Burke's cosy conception of the aristocracy as ancestrally virtuous, and thus necessarily virtuous still, took no account of the manifest, and highly dangerous, corruption of the élite, and it was this concern which could lead respectably conservative authors into their very un-Burkean understanding of rank as meaningless without an animating virtue. Mary Robinson, for example, or George Walker in his *Theodore Cyphon* (1796), both admittedly on the radical fringe, took the view that rank was nothing without merit. We hear a character respond to Cyphon's bragging of his lineage, for instance, by calling him a 'Miserable self-created being of non-importance,' and asking 'of what value is thy boasted birth, since it only gave thee power to be a villain?'<sup>62</sup> Few, and surely not even Burke, could have given a satisfactory answer to the question in practice, but this was hardly the point for, in theory at least, it was impossible to contend both that rank was meaningless without virtue and that rank was worthy of respect and submission regardless of its degradation. As we have seen, the separation of institutions and manners (whether adopted as a deliberate strategy or not) was one outstandingly effective technique for authors endeavouring to resolve this dilemma, for it could be argued fairly cogently that it was the institution of aristocracy that deserved allegiance whilst it remained a duty to arraign the corruption of the manners of individuals amongst the élite. But novelists had at their disposal some rather more puissant techniques, for within fiction, they were uniquely able to show aristocrats as both respectable as an order and respectable as individuals, as a class who inherited their virtues and as human beings who proved themselves worthy of the esteem to which their rank entitled them. And thus, of course, novelists were able to address their dilemma, and to present a solution to the paradox of the hierarchy as both necessary and rightful, and yet corruptible and, too often, in need of reformation.

Probably the most straightforward literary method of exposing corrupt aristocrats without perpetrating any collateral damage on the institution of aristocracy was to tell a story of usurpation. There were two advantages. First, the usurper could be portrayed as entirely corrupt without offering a challenge to hierarchy, since, obviously, a usurper was not a true member of the élite. Second, and potentially more significantly, a character (temporarily) dispossessed of his or her rank could prove his or her worth in a humble sphere before reclaiming his or her birthright and, it was not too much to be hoped, perhaps even redeeming the institution of aristocracy. This kind of interference with, that is to say rectification of, society's hierarchy also had the additional benefit of not endorsing social mobility, or nabobism, since the dispossessed character's sudden elevation was only a restoration of the proper order. Of course, this was not a technique new in the novels of the '90s, but had long been popular, particularly in that most fashionable of late eighteenth century literary forms, the gothic novel, a genre which since the 1760s had specialised in charting the restorations of rightful heirs to rightful places, their own virtue, and the vices of their usurpers, as the twin forcing powers behind the process. *The Castle of Otranto* of 1764 presents perhaps the classic example, but it was a trope the popularity of which did not diminish as the

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<sup>62</sup> Walker, *Theodore Cyphon*, III, 203. See also, for example, Robinson, *Hubert de Sevrac*, I, 203, II, 67 and *passim*.



century wore on. The usefulness of these tales of usurpation to those authors anxious to deliver a conservative message depended on the dual presentation of the usurper as manifestly unfit for his appropriated rôle and the evident innate noble qualities of the usurped figure, that is to say his or her natural, but repressed, aristocracy. On the one hand, the usurper proved the rectitude of the natural order which he had disrupted by his inability to perform the functions of those who were born to fulfil those rôles, just as the nabob or the leveller had also failed. And on the other hand, that hierarchical order was validated by the fact that even in obscurity the hero or heroine, the true, natural aristocrat, could be recognised as most suited to a place at the head of the social order.

A particularly striking example of this evident fitness for the job of aristocrat is to be found, for instance, in Clara Reeve's *Old English Baron* (1777), in which the gates of the castle that is rightfully his fly open as Edmund approaches them, even though, to all appearances, he is nothing but the son of a peasant.<sup>63</sup> When we eventually find that Edmund actually is an aristocrat, we remember these doors and understand them as a validation of his title to that rank and as a preternatural endorsement of rank itself. It was not, however, Reeve's supernatural validation of natural aristocracy that would be used by anti-Jacobins in the '90s to endorse the propriety of hierarchy. Rather it was her insistence that, even in humble life, Edmund's virtues, clearly the sort of virtues which would befit an aristocrat, were always evident, which would prove most useful. Reeve had pointed out that Edmund was noted for his 'gentle manners, his generous heart,' and, most significantly, for 'his noble qualities', which were, we were told, noticeably 'uncommon in those of his birth and breeding'.<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, then, he is a natural aristocrat on two counts, for he actually is an aristocrat by birth, as we ultimately discover, and he deserves to be an aristocrat by virtue of his noble behaviour. The order in which we find out these qualifications is crucial. Because Reeve first shows that he deserves to be an aristocrat, and only then that he is one, the reader is taught that virtue is the basis for respect and deference, but that virtue is, simply *is*, concomitant with aristocracy. Reeve's exposition of natural aristocracy, in other words, was a technique which could go some way to obviating the dilemma over whether rank should be valued because of the virtues of its holders or purely because of its rectitude as an institution. By showing rank, as Reeve had done, as determined by merit, which was only then discovered to coincide with existing hierarchical formations, and by showing displaced heroes and heroines continually proving this conjunction, authors were setting up new level playing fields upon which each generation of aristocrats could re-prove, as it were, their qualifications for their high rank, as Burke had suggested that their ancestors had done before them. Such proofs not only vindicated their personal claims to succession, but those of the aristocracy as a whole as well as the entire matrix of temporal authorities for which nobility acted as an emblem.

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<sup>63</sup> Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* [1777; Oxford, 1967], ed. James Trainer, pp.53 and 130.

<sup>64</sup> Reeve, *Old English Baron*, p.52.

So often do aristocrats vindicate their rank in this way in the fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries - proving themselves noble by their beliefs and deeds before, often to their own surprise, having their genetic nobility proved - and so similar are the ways in which novelists orchestrated the process, that a few favourite examples should suffice to give the general impression. *The Priory of St. Bernard*, for instance, is nicely transparent in this respect. We follow the story of another Edmund, son of the cruel Lord de Courcy, the man who has killed Elgiva, mother of Maud, Laura and Raby. Having been banished from his father's presence for showing signs of remorse, Edmund is accepted almost as a brother by the children of Elgiva, despite the taint of his father's sin, for his obvious nobility dictates it. They think him virtuous, and determine to think him so whatever his background might hold, and they even admit him to their hidden sanctuary. Later, alone and about to take his own life through shame of his past, Edmund wanders into a hermit's cave. The hermit makes plain the continuing wickedness of Edmund's father, until cut short by the dutiful son - 'but hold!' says Edmund, 'he is my father still.' The hermit urges him to revenge himself on his evil father, but Edmund refuses, prompting the hermit to reveal that he was merely testing Edmund, finding him far more dutiful than he could have hoped. For de Courcy is not Edmund's father, and nor is he the genuine Earl of Manston, both roles rightfully appertaining to none other than the hermit who, having proved the virtue of his son, is now happy to hand on his title to him.<sup>65</sup> In the hermit's cave, then, we discover that virtue is concomitant with lineage, for not only is Edmund a nobleman, but de Courcy, the villain, is not an earl. Because we discover this only after witnessing Edmund's virtues in action, however, we are allowed to continue to believe simultaneously and with no contradiction that it is the characters of aristocrats, and thus the utility of aristocracy, that makes it precious, but that aristocracy is also somehow, ineffably and inescapably, valuable in its own right.

For other prime examples we might turn to Charles Lucas' *Castle of St. Donats* (1798), in which the foundling Jack Smith proves his worth in humble life before a crucifix in his possession is found to match up with that of a French duke whose son he turns out to be, or to Mary Meeke's *Count St. Blancard* (1795), in which a strange mark on his body, and various artifacts discovered in his crib when it was deposited on a doorstep, reveal the apparently lowly Dubois to be the genealogical aristocrat his virtues and deportment had always hinted at.<sup>66</sup> In Bisset's *Douglas*, no birthmarks or ancestral jewels were required to prove the hero's title to the Highland lairdship which had been wrested from his family by designing imposters. Douglas proves his lineage emphatically by defeating all-comers, and particularly an 'insolent plebian' (and a Lowlander), at shot-putt, hammer-throwing, wrestling and all the other sports at the Highland Games he happens upon in his travels.<sup>67</sup> Even more explicit, typically, is Brydges, who

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<sup>65</sup> M. Harley [?], *Priory of St. Bernard*, I, 61-65 and 102-105.

<sup>66</sup> Charles Lucas, *The Castle of St. Donats; or, the History of Jack Smith* [London, 1798], passim and III, 124 for the revelation of Smith's birth; Mary Meeke, *Count St. Blancard; or, the Prejudiced Judge. A Novel* [1795; New York, 1977], passim, especially, II, 174-201. A sceptre-shaped birthmark performs the same office in the anonymous *Siege of Belgrade: An Historical Novel* [London, 1789], II, 101ff.

<sup>67</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, II, 238-44.

made no bones about the natural aristocracy of his hero in *Le Forester*, having him exhibit all the qualities which an aristocrat, in the author's well-rehearsed opinion, should possess, until such time as he was able to triumph over the villain who had usurped his rightful place, when we learn that 'Le Forester had now full room for the display of those vigorous and commanding abilities, which, however clouded, had still lighted him amidst the dark tempests of his former life.'<sup>68</sup>

A more historical seam was mined by Charlotte Smith in *Marchmont* and Jane West in *The Loyalists*, in both of which novels an overt fidelity also forms the basis of the virtues displayed by the displaced protagonists before their eventual, inevitable, and well deserved restoration. In the former, the Marchmont family, we learn, were a 'brave race of noble gentlemen' who remained untitled only because they refused such honours, but who had lost their estates, their wealth and their status as a result of their loyalty to the more unfortunate of the Stuart kings. The current scion, our hero, is destined to recapture all the past glories of his family, which he earns by his stalwart opposition to the Revolution in France, to corruption in Britain, and even, now he has had time to reconsider his family's history, to the Jacobite cause his forefathers had supported, all coming on top of the active benevolence he and his family have long spread around their aged dependents. Indeed, the last pages of the novel shower on Marchmont and his new wife not only the return of his familial estate, but two new ones and an unexpectedly swollen dowry.<sup>69</sup> West is even more explicit in making her heroes' political probity the basis of their restorations. We follow the stories of Evellin, formerly (that is to say, before his usurpation) Allan Neville, Earl of Bellingham, and of Sedley, who succeeds as Lord Arthur de Vallance at the close of the novel, as they career around England during the Civil War and Interregnum. Evellin's story is conventional - in exile from his true place in society, he and his children display the usual virtues which merit the restitution of their titles and lands upon the larger Restoration of 1660. But it is Sedley's progress which is more revealing. He had started off an enemy to King Charles, and, in order to deserve the rank which (we latterly discover) is his by birth, he has to realise the errors of his ways. He does so, eventually abjuring Cromwell and enabling the future Charles II to escape from Worcester, and it is as a committed royalist that he inherits the title to which he is now heir by merit as well as birth.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, Cromwell's regime had been deliberately pressed into service by West as a testing ground for her characters. Sedley, who has been privy to the Lord Protector's plans, knows of 'the secret intention of the fanatics to abolish the Peers as a political body' - a project categorically indicative of their wickedness - and to consider their estates as held by permission only, not by right. As a result, and as Sedley points out, in Cromwell's England 'Greatness is thus reduced to the bare simplicity of individual

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<sup>68</sup> Brydges, *Le Forester*, III, 221.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, *Marchmont*, I, 279, II, 50-54, 131 and 211.

<sup>70</sup> West, *Loyalists*, II, 223 and III, 87-93.

desert.<sup>71</sup> Nothing could suit West better, for Cromwell's iniquity re-establishes the level playing field and allows her to demonstrate unequivocally that those who happen to rise to greatness from this equality, and those who display all the characteristics that merit their rise, also happen to be those who, she subsequently reveals, are entitled, by their birth, to do so. Such natural aristocracy is the solution to the novelists' paradox. 'I am one of those stern teachers,' Sedley's tutor had said in answer to an enquiry about the origins of his student, 'who see nobility only in virtuous actions and high attainments, but even in your sense of the word, my pupil has a right to the name.'<sup>72</sup> And it is vital that Sedley is both. Were he not, were he lacking in either of these qualifications, he would pose a positive danger to the society which honoured him, rather than adorning it as he does.

It is a point that various novels expand on. As is made clear in Meeke's *Count St. Blancard*, for instance, to esteem aristocrats only because of their lineage, on the one hand, was to fall into the errors of the French *ancien régime*. There, laments Dubois, having just discovered his own noble ancestry, 'To succeed in every prospect we can form, we need only be great, they will excuse our being good'. Once the necessity of virtue being united with aristocracy had been forgotten, he concludes, the corruption of the old order becomes inevitable.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Meeke has dramatised the mistake in her degenerate aristocrat De Ceare, Dubois' long-time persecutor, who ultimately receives his just humiliation when he finds himself suddenly of a rank far inferior to the man he had been used to looking down upon. 'I often think 'tis a great pity,' says Rhubarbin, Dubois' foster-father, 'sarcastically looking at Mr. de Ceare' and rubbing salt into the wound, that 'our characters are not wrote more legibly upon our foreheads; it was astonishing you could ever suppose the Count de St. Blancard was my son.' But, of course, Dubois' nobility was obvious to all who understood nobility correctly, for his good deeds spoke more eloquently of his ancestry than all the birthmarks, tokens and jewels which finally proved his high birth.<sup>74</sup>

And yet, to understand nobility as personal merit without inherited rank was equally dangerous, was one of the fallacies into which the Revolution in France, in its attempt to right the wrongs of the *ancien régime*, had fallen, and it was an error that was treated with exactly the same kind of contempt, sometimes rationalised and sometimes satirical, as had been heaped on the opposite mistake of de Ceare. There can be no more closely reasoned investigation of the meaning of rank to be found, either in or out of fiction, than in Dallas' *Percival*, for example, in which one George Stanley, apparently a footman but a man who has performed numerous valorous deeds, provides the focus for debate between our hero and Towers, his older and wiser correspondent. 'Here is a young man,' says Percival, 'amiable, brave,

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<sup>71</sup> West, *Loyalists*, II, 224.

<sup>72</sup> West, *Loyalists*, I, 332.

<sup>73</sup> Meeke, *Count St. Blancard*, I, 84.

<sup>74</sup> Meeke, *Count St. Blancard*, III, 156.



virtuous, with noble faculties, panting for knowledge, gaining all hearts, and possessing a person that heightens the charms of such a mind, but', he continues, 'having worn a livery, our hearts are beset with repugnance'. Is this mere prejudice, he asks, 'or can its origin be reasonably accounted for?' We are not left long in wait of an answer, and when it does come it is emphatic. 'Should virtue only give esteem and rank', asks our hero's mentor rhetorically, before explaining the correct response to a figure like Stanley in terms that suggest he has just put down his copy of the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*:

No; talents, and wealth, and with them *birth*, must be the usual paths, for they bestow power. ... With talents, wealth, and *birth*, the mind connects liberal endowments, because they can and do generally procure them; with certain conditions it connects a want of liberality, and a deficiency in gentle manners, because they are the consequences of them. ... A livery and its attendant train of thought will ever accompany the man who has worn one, be the esteem he merits and receives what it may.<sup>75</sup>

Of course, it takes only a few more volumes before we discover that George Stanley had never been a footman at all, but was in fact the long-lost heir to Lord Powic - a discovery which only goes to prove the wisdom of Towers' lesson, since, as he rather self-congratulatingly puts it, he 'had never thoroughly believed that the brave Stanley had been the footman', not because he was brave or good, since a footman 'may be brave and good and estimable', but 'because his manners, his notions, his ambition for mental elevation, bespoke a mind that young as it was had been otherwise employed than in the sciences of brushing coats and blacking shoes'. Virtue, Towers teaches, may be found in humble ranks, but it can never, on its own, be a qualification for nobility since, as Percival learns, 'the happiness, nay the very existence of society, depends upon the due subordination of its members, and the contentment with that station assigned to us by Providence.'<sup>76</sup>

The same point is made, but with more verve and sophistication, in Helen Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800), where it is the apparently humble, but suspiciously mysterious, Henry St. Julian who attracts the attention and admiration of all through his valiant and benevolent deeds in the cause of chivalry and the counter-Revolution, causing many to comment that he possesses 'true nobility of mind, if not of station', so that in all eyes he 'quickly soared superior to the supposed disadvantages of a plebian parentage'.<sup>77</sup> This is all conventional preparation for the revelation that St. Julian is really Adelaide's lost son, but it is the accompanying speech of vain prattler turned fashionable democrat, Madame d'Angereau (which we should pronounce '*dangereux*', of course), which Craik uses to expose the peril of defining nobility purely in terms of deeds. D'Angereau starts off in magnanimous vein:

Political opinions have nothing to do with individual merit, which ought to receive its due portion of applause in despite of every foreign consideration; not but I confess

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<sup>75</sup> Dallas, *Percival*, II, 191-94. My emphasis.

<sup>76</sup> Dallas, *Percival*, III, 155 and II, 195.

<sup>77</sup> Helen Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet. A Tale* [London, 1800], III, 168-69.

myself pleased to find the hero of the piece is the artificer of his own fortune, and by no means indebted to a long line of worm-eaten ancestors either for hereditary pride, wealth, or weakness.<sup>78</sup>

Obviously, it is in this last sentence that the satire lies, for St. Julian is an aristocrat of the most illustrious heritage, as we discover at the end of volume four through the agency of some ancestral jewels and a family signet. Craik achieves three things with this satire. First, anyone at all versed in the typical structures of novels such as this must realise that d'Angereau is wrong about our hero's birth, a knowledge which undermines her praise for St. Julian's 'self-made' rise, his 'nabobism', and an error which also discredits the first part of her statement, for glorious deeds carried out in an unjust cause are not, as she maintains they are, worthy of admiration. Second, Craik presents her opinion, and, as we have been seeing, the orthodox opinion of anti-Jacobinism in fiction, that rank does not, and should not be allowed to, exist in deeds and gestures only, but requires hereditary validation also. And third, and perhaps most interestingly, Craik suggests that St. Julian's pure nobility, for so long isolated from the pride, wealth and weakness which aristocracy is prey to, will in some ways be able to redeem aristocracy as a whole.

Of course, there is no reason to believe Madame d'Angereau, a democrat and a fool, when she says that a long line of aristocratic ancestors is bound to be proud, weak or even wealthy. Indeed, in novels it sometimes seems that they are more often than not humble, heroic and poor, having generally been dispossessed of their estates and fortunes. Yet if novelists delighted in supplying themselves with their heroes and heroines from the nobility, they were equally happy, and, as we have noticed, seemingly duty-bound, to exhibit the corruption of the élite too. *Adelaide de Narbonne* was no exception, for not only does it contain some archetypically degenerate behaviour from sundry aristocrats gathered at a masquerade, but Adelaide's own father was an aristocrat of the most tyrannous and avaricious stamp. What Craik offers in her novel, though, and what becomes apparent as d'Angereau is congratulating St. Julian on his self-made heroism, is the proposition that an aristocrat who has been brought up in a secluded and distinctly humble sphere could in some way purge and purify, and perhaps even redeem, the institution of aristocracy.

Such a hope was not only confined to Craik's fiction. A hint of it is to be found in the novels of Charles Lucas, for example, some distinctly meritocratic, not to say *bourgeois*, sentiments emanating from Jack Smith, though soon to be revealed as the Duke de Meritè, in *The Castle of St. Donats*. 'The man,' he admits, 'who rises by his own virtues, is undoubtedly superior to him who only borrows them from his forefathers', and even if the author evidently felt it necessary for Jack to add a quick rider to the effect that 'the honours that are derived from our ancestors, are surely to be respected and commended, as the continuation of our esteem for the original', we can remember his opinion that it is better to rise by one's own abilities when he inherits his title and think of him as one who will rejuvenate the aristocracy by

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<sup>78</sup> Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne*, III, 170.

virtue of the values learned during his humble youth.<sup>79</sup> In his *Infernal Quixote* too, Lucas shows himself unusual amongst the zealous anti-Jacobins, amongst whom he had every right to count himself, for he ostentatiously denies his hero, Wilson Wilson any aristocratic connections while endowing Lord Marauder, his villain, with an unimpeachable pedigree. Early on in the novel, he even went so far as to rub the social difference between them into his readers' noses, insisting that both were born at exactly the same moment and having a quack astrologer attempt to read their stars so as to account for their different social status.<sup>80</sup>

The corruption of the élite was a characteristic theme of the Evangelical lobby and so it is with rather less surprise that we find Jane West filling her *Infidel Father* with pious hopes that a heroine brought up in obscurity might possibly be able to redeem the sins of the nobility whose errors pose a social, and according to many, deeply political, as well as moral, danger to themselves and to others. Importantly, though, for West as for any other anti-Jacobin, the moral rectitude of any character who was to effect this redemption was still not given preeminence over their genealogical right to a position amongst the nobility, and an education in obscurity seldom meant that the agents of redemption were lacking in hereditary nobility. It was just that, using the natural aristocracy trope, an uncorrupted aristocrat could be ushered into the world of the élite so as to reform them from within. Even in the midst of her Evangelical zeal, then, we find West anxious to stress the importance of inherited, rather than merited, aristocracy, her sagacious Mr Brudenell revealing to his ward Sophia, the heiress to the corrupt Lord Glanville but a girl brought up in humble life, the destiny he had been planning for her:

I wish *you* to be reconciled to the rank of life to which *you were born*. I have laboured to restore you to it, in the hope that you will 'be a burning and a shining light,' even in the midst of an evil world. Let your soul rise to the performance of the extensive duties which your situation requires. I have a firm persuasion that you will thus act; for you possess one invaluable advantage which the nobility of this kingdom *often* want, you *have been regularly educated as a Christian*.<sup>81</sup>

Despite her emphasis on the moral redemption Sophia could effect, West's was a political as well as religious message. The corruption of Lord Glanville was multi-faceted, irreligious certainly, but clearly tinged with new philosophy too. By claiming her birthright, Sophia was not only purifying the aristocracy, but could be safeguarding the nation from threats of levelling precipitated by a lack of faith in

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<sup>79</sup> Lucas, *Castle of St. Donats*, II, 269.

<sup>80</sup> Lucas, *Infernal Quixote*, I, 16-18. Until the final sentence of the novel, so familiar have such last-minute revelations become, one half expects Lucas to disclose Wilson to be the real heir to Marauder's title, but it does not happen. Having been a Duke's favourite at one point, and having captured the villainous Marauder, Wilson is, however, the recipient of a substantial estate and fortune. In general terms, Lucas seems to have understood Wilson as a sort of Everyman character, and the sort of social conciliator which his troubled times required. 'The urbanity of his manners,' he recounts, 'which was so conspicuous in this young man, penetrate, like the genial warmth of the sun, into every breast; that steady uprightness of conduct, which ever applauded what was right in others, and condemned what was wrong, made him appear to all what he really was - the friend of humankind. - No poor man ever thought him proud, no rich one mean. In whatever company he was present, he never affected to be superior to any one; and among the greatest men in the kingdom not the smallest trace of an abject servility was to be perceived' (I, 101-102).

<sup>81</sup> West, *Infidel Father*, II, 70.

a hierarchical system which had lost both its moral and practical justifications. When Sophia does inherit the title and the estate, which the suicide of Lord Glanville's daughter by a second marriage allows her to do, the fact that she can imbue her new rank with the purity, usefulness and benevolence, the Christianity, which she learned during her humble upbringing will make Britain a much more virtuous, and a much safer place. Indeed, such is the purpose of all these natural aristocrats whose careers we have been following. When they return to their rightful places they rejuvenate the rank from which they have been excluded, effecting the reformation of the manners of the great, so necessary for the safety of the nation in an age of Revolution, with a great deal more success than any dry sermon or moralising treatise could hope to achieve. Perhaps simply writing of the reformation of the élite in novels was not going to achieve it in reality, but so widespread was the dramatisation of the process in fiction that it speaks clearly of the contemporary understanding of the necessity of such revitalisation. For most anti-Jacobin authors, in other words, whether they were overt Evangelicals or not, such a reformation of the great was the means of some change without which, as Burke had put it in his *Reflections*, a state was without the means of its conservation.<sup>82</sup> In an age of revolution, constitutional change was out of the question and any hint of an assault on the hierarchies which underpinned society was treason. What we have seen in these conservative fictions, then, was that all desire for the social change that was deemed to be imperative if the Jacobin threat was to be repulsed was channelled into this one pious hope of a reformation from within.

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<sup>82</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 72.



## 8: Appropriations and affinities:

### Anti-Jacobinism requisitions the novel

All the World's mad after Liberty now -- for my part I wish 'em joy of it and Liberty in Love as well as Politicks, is my *Motto*.

- Anon., *Taste and Feeling* (1790)

Much anti-Jacobin fiction, as we have observed in the previous chapters, was possessed of a number of common characteristics, and it is largely on this basis that the anti-Jacobin novel may be judged a coherent literary genre, and thus a historical phenomenon so cogent and convincing that it demands to be included as a significant element of any appraisal of the British response to the French Revolution. Yet many of these novels also exhibit a substantial degree of variety. It would seem more appropriate to contrast, rather than to equate, Edward Dubois' *St. Godwin* with Robert Bisset's *Douglas* (both 1800), for instance, the former being consistently flippant and deliberately comic in its scolding of Godwin, firmly in the burlesque tradition of *Hudibras*, *MacFlecknoe*, or *Shamela* perhaps, whilst the other, Bisset's onslaught, remains constantly committed and generally rather earnest in its denunciation of the Jacobin menace. It is a heterogeneity further emphasised by those novels published during the conflict with Napoleonic, rather than Revolutionary, France, still discernibly anti-Jacobin in their treatment of the Revolution, its ideologies and its outcome, but certainly belonging to a different generation of fiction. Comparing these novels with the sort of urgent fiction Bisset was producing, or even the more insouciant work of Dubois, one question that naturally arises is which, if any, should be regarded as propaganda. On the one hand, it seems obvious that all such novels were written with a purpose, produced, published, and possibly read, for their didactic properties during a period of ideological crisis. But on the other, so nonchalant do many of these novels appear, however definably conservative they remain, that one cannot help but doubt that their authors were possessed of any didactic, let alone propagandistic, intent.

Propaganda is a problematic term, implying a deliberate intent to lead, or even mislead, the reader into a certain understanding of the subject being addressed. Part of what this chapter aims to show is that this kind of authorial *intent* is not the best way of judging what is, and what is not, anti-Jacobin fiction. Even writers such as Bisset, as we witnessed with their employment of the vaurien figure, were always mindful that the most efficacious means of cajoling their readers into orthodoxy was to merge their ideological didacticism with already existing conventions of the novel. And as soon as we find them doing this, the line between deliberate propaganda and fiction which had perhaps unconsciously absorbed

an anti-Jacobin agenda becomes very blurred, making hazardous any attempt to distinguish novels produced with an ideological purpose as their major motivation from others which were possessed of a conservative tendency almost by default. One only has to refer to my epigraph for this chapter, or the many other similar paradoxically a-political treatments of political issues for which it might stand, to realise how difficult it can be to determine whether an author had enlisted anti-Jacobin sentiments for ideological, or merely artistic, reasons.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the boundary between deliberate and inadvertent anti-Jacobinism in fiction is so blurred that it would scarcely be a useful concept, except that we can observe novelists crossing its nominal line so frequently that it serves to emphasise the symbiotic relationship between an author's ideological and artistic purposes. Processes of appropriation worked both ways, with committed anti-Jacobins deliberately commandeering some of fiction's conventions to enhance their didacticism, whilst less dedicated authors, and often the most militant anti-Jacobins as well, commandeered certain anti-Jacobin conventions to assist in their literary endeavours. Although to a certain extent this chapter will discriminate between these two techniques, its ultimate aim is to demonstrate that, no matter what an author's intention, the effect of their anti-Jacobinism would be much the same. Indeed, the very fact that the success of conservative fiction published in the 1790s and very early 1800s appears to have resulted in anti-Jacobinism being absorbed into the very structures of many subsequent novels, sustaining the ideological characteristics of the fiction of the Revolution crisis for a substantial length of time after the sense of crisis itself had subsided, may be more historically significant than the fact that a few, perhaps isolated, novelists took up their pens to write anti-Jacobin propaganda in the '90s.

In the first part of this chapter, then, I shall be examining the appropriation of some fictional patterns by anti-Jacobin novelists. In the second section, I will be exploring the question of whether the affinity between anti-Jacobinism and the novel that became apparent by about 1800 was created on the basis of these appropriations, or whether it had always existed within the genre. In the third, I shall be looking at the re-appropriation, as it were, of distinctively anti-Jacobin modes of fiction into novels which on no account could be regarded as propaganda. With the following chapter, which will examine a number of external pressure acting upon novelists to coax and compel them into an anti-Jacobin conformity, this analysis of how anti-Jacobinism came to be almost inherent in the novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries should be able tell us more about the nature of the British response to the French Revolution, about the dimensions of, and acquiescence to, anti-Jacobinism, than the work of a handful of individuals ever could.

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Godfrey Grieder cites this passage from the anonymous play *Taste and Feeling* as exhibiting the usefulness of the Revolution to the comic playwright, and it was surely no different for the novelist. 'The French Revolution in the British Drama: A Study in British Popular Literature in the Decade of Revolution' [Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1957], p.16.

### 1 *Anti-Jacobinism commandeers the conventions of the novel*

It was the young George Canning who suggested that the shift from the romance to the novel, the principal alteration of literary modes that contemporary commentators claimed to have witnessed in the eighteenth century, had merely entailed the transformation of merciless giants into austere guardians and she-dragons into maiden aunts, and had been achieved simply by stripping the heroines of their royalty and substituting for the knight-errant the 'accomplished fine gentleman'.<sup>2</sup> It might be added that from this new 'domesticated' product to the anti-Jacobin novel was an equally small step, and something we have already observed with the vaurien. The Jacobin in the fiction of the 1790s and 1800s was little more than the vile seducer who had debauched his way through innumerable novels over the three or four decades prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution, and as such he played the same stock rôle as the giant or dragon might be supposed to have done for previous generations of readers. Anti-Jacobins merely appropriated, without materially altering, existing fictional patterns for their own, apparently new purposes.

Of course, it cannot be ascertained for certain that conservative authors deliberately and strategically commandeered the stock character of the rake for their propagandistic purposes, but it was an obvious strategy, and one in keeping with the ostensible overall project of anti-Jacobin novelists to export their ideological convictions, by putting them in a more appealing form, to that section of society which was already consuming novels and, many alleged, being corrupted by a genre which was at best merely dissipated, and at worst genuinely radical. Also, even if we have no helpful authors' journals to explain exactly why they wrote as they did, there are plenty of passages from the novels themselves which are fairly explicit about the way in which novelists sought to appropriate already existing novelistic structures for their new ends. Robert Dallas, for instance, is remarkably candid in having Stanhope, the vaurien character of his *Percival* (1801), announce that 'To make one's way in these times, a clever fellow does not address the heart;' as an old-style villain might have done, but 'no, he soars to the head.' And Stanhope perfectly embodies the new rake, relying on new philosophy to accomplish his scheme to debauch an innocent woman (despite admitting that he himself had never believed a word of it) when once he would have used the more traditional artillery of sly duplicity and simpering flattery.<sup>3</sup> The facility with which Lord James Marauder, the Infernal Quixote, moves backwards and forwards between a new philosophical assault on the virtue of Emily, directing her reading to include Godwin and Wollstonecraft, and a battery of more traditional techniques, eventually engineering her compliance by claiming, in the most approved language of the novel idiom, that he cannot marry her since he would be disinherited were he to do so,

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<sup>2</sup> *The Microcosm*, 26 (May 14, 1787), 342.

<sup>3</sup> R. C. Dallas, *Percival; or, Nature Vindicated* [London, 1801], III, 190.

makes a similar point.<sup>4</sup> As does Jane West, who we find even more explicit about the motivations of her villain, Fitzosbourne, his plots going well beyond those perpetrated by his ancestral rakes, for in this day and age, she tells us, his covert war was waged 'not merely against the chastity, but also against the principles of his victims: not solely against their reputation, their peace of mind, and their temporal prospects, but against their notions of rectitude and religion'.<sup>5</sup> This was the rake in a new light perhaps, updated for the times and the didactic purpose he was now required to fulfil, but still much the same as he had ever been too, occupying exactly the same place in the plot, and moreover exciting the same interested revulsion in the reader. This was the anti-Jacobins' achievement, displaying Jacobinism in vivid colour, certainly enough to fascinate, but leaving the readers, once drawn to the vaurien, with no choice but to be revolted by what they had seen.

We have already examined in some detail how the anti-Jacobins enrolled the rake and coquette in their cause, but what becomes striking about the anti-Jacobin novel when we appraise it as a genre, is how they managed, as if systematically, to appropriate almost all the staple characters, themes and episodes from the late eighteenth century novel for their own campaign. Again though, it should be emphasised, that to implant their anti-Jacobinism in the fabric of the novel as it stood, to impregnate the form that had apparently achieved such popularity by the 1790s with their ideological principles, would be not only the natural procedure for a novelist to adopt, but was in keeping with their crusade to recapture the novel form itself from their opponents, 'to repel the enemy's insidious attacks with similar weapons' as West had phrased it.<sup>6</sup> In any case, the alternatives were limited, for if they were not prepared to adopt already existing fictional forms, authors would have had either to invent new prose forms to carry their edifying strictures, or place their didacticism within the dry, laborious, and blunt form of a political treatise within a novel - such as had been the weakness of a relatively unsophisticated attempt at conservative fiction like Edward Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaïde* (1791). The most obvious examples of this process of appropriation are to be found in the adoption of complete sub-genres of the novel for anti-Jacobin purposes in the '90s and early 1800s, the oriental tale being pressed into service, for instance, by the authors of *Solyman and Fatima; or, the Sceptic Convinced* (1791) and *Massouf, or the Philosophy of the Day* (1802), the gothic being commissioned for active service by Sophia King in *The Fatal Secret, or Unknown Warrior* (1801), the historical romance by Clara Reeve in her *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* (1793), the quixote novel in Lucas' *Infernal Quixote* (1801), Henry James Pye's *Democrat*

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Lucas, *Infernal Quixote. A Tale of the Day* [London, 1801], I, 168-78. A hero directing the reading of his intended lover constitutes, in itself, a highly conventional episode in fiction, and, although it is generally much more innocent books that form the subject of their midnight lucubrations, the hero's tutelage usually has at least the metaphorical effect of liberating the heroine from the incarceration, mental or physical, imposed by an ignorant and unrefined guardian, and thus leant itself very readily to incorporation within the pattern of the anti-Jacobin novel. See, for instance, Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* [1793; Oxford, 1989, ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis], pp.21-51.

<sup>5</sup> Jane West, *A Tale of the Times* [London, 1799], II, 153.

<sup>6</sup> West, *Tale of the Times*, III, 386-87.



(1795), and in *The History of Sir George Warrington* (1797), and even the 'anti-novel', or parody of novel-influenced behaviour (which rendered the victim all too often susceptible to the snares of new philosophy), by Mary Charlton in *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (1799).

Within novels, though, at the micro rather than macro level, this policy of appropriation is just as convincing. If we examine only the employment of all the trappings of the gothic, for instance, we find that conservative novels commandeered them on a wholesale basis, leaving us in no doubt that the anti-Jacobins were equipping themselves from the same warehouse in Tavistock Street that Walter Scott thought all gothic novelists resorted to in order to fill their 'ill-sustained masquerades' with the requisite ghosts, knight-errants, magicians and damsels.<sup>7</sup> Banditti, for instance, an essential ingredient of the gothic, proved a popular device for anti-Jacobins to use to discredit their radical opponents, however unlikely the conflation might sound. The author of *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805) had the hero and heroine cower in fear of 'banditti or assassins', by which was clearly meant agents of the Revolution, whilst Thomas Surr, as well as introducing a suspected ghost into his *George Barnwell* (1798), has a character speak of his fear of the curiously conjoined 'banditti of illuminati'.<sup>8</sup> Another wonderful example is offered by Sophia King who came up with a new species of villain with her band of new philosophical banditti, lurking in their 'den of philosophic depravity' in *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy* (1798). As well as kidnapping, robbery, murder and all the other duties incumbent on banditti for hundreds of novels past, they endeavoured to undermine the principles of their victims too, using their power of argument as often as their stilettos, and prompting Waldorf, at long last, to realise that 'Great, indeed, are the dangers of philosophy'.<sup>9</sup>

Helen Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800) includes no banditti, but is full of much other gothic paraphernalia, the narrative circling around the mysterious Rock of Narbonne, from which ghostly voices emanate, and which is eventually revealed to be the refuge for persecuted innocents, and to be riddled with secret passages and piled high with treasure. Craik clearly depends on the Rock for her plot, and there can be no doubt that it adds to the entertainment that the novel provides, but it is also there for the expression of her anti-Jacobinism, for it is the vestige of the French royal family which is being sheltered there and, following the defeat of the Chouans, it is the only outpost of France which remains unviolated by the barbarism of the Revolutionaries. Likewise, Craik, along with many other novelists of the '90s who also seized on the implications of this particular Revolutionary decree, vividly detailed the dissolution and

<sup>7</sup> Scott, Introduction to Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* [1764; Edinburgh, 1811], p.xxii.

<sup>8</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc: Containing Some Views of English and Foreign Society* [London, 1805], I, 9; Surr, *George Barnwell. A Novel* [London, 1798], I, 147-48.

<sup>9</sup> King, *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy. A Philosophical Tale* [London, 1798], II, 47-64. The banditti use their new philosophy to justify their crimes: 'Vice,' says their chief, 'is indeed frequently a false expression. Analyse what comes under the imputation; place it in a philosophical light, and see it as it really is, an idle bug-bear to frighten fools - the vision of an hour - the fears of the night - reviewed at day-light, it causes laughter. Philosophy can soon reconcile us to the commission of such nick-named atrocity' (II, 60).

despoliation of a community of innocent nuns by the agents of the Revolution, their picturesque convent, a convention of so much gothic and non-gothic fiction, reduced to ruins and the nuns made 'a prey to the licentious soldiery, or the ravages of famine, - houseless, helpless, and unprotected', left to 'linger about the fallen remnants of their late happy and hospitable, but then desolate abode'.<sup>10</sup>

The close association of the gothic and the anti-Jacobin is further emphasised in Pye's *Democrat*, in which we find that the first acts of depravity committed by Le Noir, even before he cut his revolutionary teeth in America, were those of a classically gothic villain of the old school. Abducting the beautiful Adelaide de Tourelles and incarcerating her in a ruined, moated abbey until her rescue by a chivalrous knight combines a use of scene and plot which must be immediately reminiscent of the gothic in general and of Ann Radcliffe's trend-setting *Romance of the Forest* (1791) in particular. For Jean Le Noir we should read Radcliffe's Marquis de Montalt; for the victim, we need only substitute Radcliffe's Adeline for Pye's Adelaide. With *The Democrat*, the Laureate Pye can have done little to repair the reputation of the Minerva Press, publishers of his fiction.<sup>11</sup>

But the choicest examples of this appropriation of the conventions of the gothic must be those to be found in Charles Lucas' *Castle of St. Donats* (1798). One particular ghost, the 'spectre of the well', in addition to providing the approved supernatural dimension to the novel, plays a distinctly ideological rôle, acting as an index of the political health of the nation - as according to Lucas' royalist and Protestant understanding of it. Lucas recounts that it first appeared during the Wars of the Roses, was quiet during the reign of Henry VIII, made frequent appearances while the Catholic Mary was on the throne, but was quiet again during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I and VI, reviving only once more 'When the unhappy Charles came to the throne'. Indeed, so much was it noticed at this period, and until the Revolution of 1688, 'that the neighbourhood can tell most wonderful tales, faithfully handed down from father to son, of the strange and wonderful pranks they played in those days.' Since the period that seems to correspond to the Hanoverian Succession the ghost has been seldom sighted, we learn, until, of course, the years immediately leading up to the present action which takes place in the mid-1790s.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, although the reader has been left for the space of a volume or two to think no more about this ghost, understanding it as half a capitulation to the pressing need to include a spectre or two in any novel that wished to be vogueish (which Lucas himself had joked about early in the novel), and half an ingenious way to inculcate a few loyalist sentiments into the narrative (if, that is, the reader had a sufficient grasp of British history, for Lucas makes the analogy by no means transparent) - in fact, it is later revealed that the 'spectre of the well' has been seen to walk recently not because of the peril of the nation, or at least not directly because of it, but because the Duke de Meritè, an émigré from France, had

<sup>10</sup> Helen Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne* [London, 1800], I, 82.

<sup>11</sup> Henry James Pye, *The Democrat: Interspersed with Anecdotes of Well Known Characters* [1795; London, 1796], I, 105-127.

<sup>12</sup> Lucas, *The Castle of St. Donats; or, the History of Jack Smith* [London, 1798], I, 83-84 and 99-100.

been hiding in this self-same well and impersonating the spectre. As Lucas explains the means by which the fugitive Duke had managed to fool the local population into believing him to be a ghost, we clearly see how he was imbuing the explained gothic, made so famous and fashionable by Radcliffe, with a new political resonance. An even more audacious amalgamation of the conventions of the genre and anti-Jacobin principles was to come, however, for the Duke still had to prove himself to be who he said he was, and the means by which he does this confirms that Lucas was straining to politicise every last cliché of the gothic.

Heroes and heroines, in late eighteenth century novels, it should be explained, were perpetually being separated at birth from their parents - aristocrats in distress in general - and were thus under the obligation of proving their identity in later life. They typically succeeded in this small matter by matching the half of a card or letter, or the piece of jewellery or some other object, which their parents had had the foresight to leave in their crib as they abandoned them to the mercy of the world, with the other half, or a second partnering artifact, retained by the parents for just such an eventuality. In *The Castle of St. Donats*, the Duke confirms not only his own identity, but that of our hero, the 'orphan' Jack Smith, by producing a crucifix of which Jack has the exact duplicate, passed on to him from his mother, proving beyond doubt that the Duke is both rightful heir to the castle and Jack's father. But it is the nature of these crucifixes which carries Lucas' ideological message, for as well as being the tokens which have restored the legitimacy to both ancestral and property relations in the novel, they physically represent that old and rightful order, since, as the Duke reveals, each arm of each crucifix exhibits 'the exact profile of the late King and Queen of France, the Dauphin, and the lovely survivor of the family, the Madame Royale', and each 'has also four screws in different parts which open, and the hair of the four august personages ... is contained in a small cavity covered by each screw.'<sup>13</sup> There may have been no explicit or obtrusive propagandising in Lucas' substitution of a royalist relic for the previously much more ideologically neutral locket or card, but the deliberateness with which he invested what had always been a symbol of the restoration of the rightful order within a novel with a distinct anti-Jacobin intimation, was a powerful method of producing fiction with a purpose.

*The Castle of St. Donats* provides only the most outstanding example of the protocols of the novel being subtly redrafted, but not materially altered, to express an anti-Jacobinism which, so effortlessly was it blended, appears almost to have lain dormant within the conventions of popular fiction, waiting to be brought out. Indeed, the latency of anti-Jacobinism in late eighteenth century fiction becomes a more and more persuasive idea the more of it one reads, for in the hands of the anti-Jacobin novelists almost any feature of the later eighteenth century novel, however devoid of explicit ideological import, could be pressed into service in their didactic campaign. Other examples perhaps do not share

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<sup>13</sup> Lucas, *Castle of St. Donats*, III, 132-35 and 124.

Lucas' audacity, but are just as impressive in their abundance, and, although it would be an unending task to catalogue them all, it will be worthwhile to examine some representative recurring fictional patterns.

One trope that no reader of novels of the 1770s, '80s, '90s, and beyond could fail to be familiar with, for example, was the stage or mail coach, or the private carriage, which, more often than not, overturned before the journey's end. No doubt such accidents were a reality of eighteenth century life, especially that idealised life of barouches and curricles which novelists so often sought to portray, but it was surely the usefulness of this device that led to its incorporation in so many novels, anti-Jacobin or not.

The stage-coach of the novel generally contained a wide variety of occupants, a rare opportunity for displaying a cross-section of society, their opinions and interactions, and one that Henry James Pye was not prepared to miss in his *Democrat*. There, his heavily schematised collection of characters, an old woman - something of a feminist - a naval officer, an attorney, a London merchant, a wise Quaker, and the vaurien Le Noir, discuss the ills of the nation, each, as the Quaker points out, holding forth loudly only on subjects about which he or she knew nothing. It quickly becomes apparent that Pye has used the convention for his own purposes, to insist that anyone foolish enough to have complaints to make about contemporary Britain could only be 'activated by the desire of displaying his own abilities', and warning that such men and women give no consideration to 'the consequences to which the adoption of their plans might lead.'<sup>14</sup>

In George Walker's *Vagabond* (1799), the appropriation of a similar episode is even more pronounced. In the stage-coach to London, Frederick, the young new philosopher, meets Adams, an ignorant radical (of the type Pye had been targeting), and the politically upright Ketchup (really an aristocrat in disguise). Whilst Adams talks nonsense, Ketchup retails the principles of Edmund Burke and Adam Ferguson, as they all debate, for the reader's edification, a succession of subjects such as the American colonies and the necessity of luxuries to the political economy of the nation, until the carriage suddenly overturns, at which each figure has a chance to prove the merit of his principles by his behaviour rather than his rhetoric. And Walker ensures that none of his readers could miss the point that each figure acts according to the worth of his opinions, with Ketchup helping to right the coach and paying the dependable labourers who rush to assist, Adams refusing to help or to pay and vindictively taking his whip to the coachman, and the philosophical Frederick standing idle, bewildered by the need to replace words with deeds.<sup>15</sup> Again, this is just one example that might stand for many. Charlotte Smith, for instance, had already attempted two similar scenes in her *Banished Man* (1794), once to denigrate the xenophobia of two Englishmen, since they were the only occupants of a carriage not to help to right it when it overturned, and once to elucidate the characters, for the first time in fact, of our hero, the royalist D'Alonville, who saves an aristocratic family from their coach when it is overturned whilst crossing a

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<sup>14</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, II, 36.

<sup>15</sup> George Walker, *The Vagabond, a Novel* [London, 1799], I, 101-20.



swollen river, and of one of Smith's principal villains, the Jacobin Heurthofen, the family's priest, who exhibits his callous cowardice by choosing this moment of utmost distress to desert the family. She also used the same device to set in motion the entire action of her *Young Philosopher* (1798).<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it was a pattern repeated so often that the novel-reader of the '90s could have been left in no doubt that a coach, for which we might read the carriage of state, once overturned, could be righted only by a legitimate hero representing the old order, and that if radicals only had been travelling in the carriage, it would forever remain a wreck.<sup>17</sup>

If the stage-coach drove uninterruptedly on from pre- to post-Revolutionary fiction, only the language of its passengers being re-envisioned to fit their new ideologically didactic purpose, other conventions of the novel were in need of more substantial emendation. Save for those authors who gave their fiction an historical setting or those who, just as commonly, were so reluctant to abandon their stock-in-trades that they were prepared to continue in a contemporary vein as if the Revolution had never happened (an eloquent ideological comment in itself), the Revolution had deprived novelists of many of their stand-bys by doing away with the abuses of the *ancien régime*. Novelists had long been attracted to an *ancien régime* setting because it offered so many opportunities to present unbridled villainy, but no longer could they fill their fiction with unrestrained aristocrats and nefarious unprincipled priests, with *lettres de cachet*, castles, convents and gaols, all under no sort of regulation save the depraved will of the sworn enemies of our heroes and heroines. But all was not lost, for Revolutionary France quickly emerged as just as well-stocked a repository of the sort of abuses which novelists had for generations gratefully taken up to provide the tribulations so necessary for the satisfactory working out of their plots. Indeed, what quickly becomes obvious is that the shift from *ancien régime* to Revolutionary persecutions was seldom more than cosmetic. In *The Parisian* (1794), for instance, we find the dastardly Comte manipulating the Revolutionary mob and the National Assembly to carry out his plans to rid himself of our hero when once he would have used a *lettre de cachet*. Likewise, in Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaïde*, it is the Revolutionary mob that sunders the happy couple when once it would have been the will of a local tyrant.<sup>18</sup> The post-Revolutionary vaurien, the almoner Heurthofen, in Smith's *Banished Man* exemplifies

<sup>16</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Banished Man. A Novel* [London, 1794], II, 7-11 and I, 81-93; *The Young Philosopher: A Novel* [London, 1798], I, 1-23. Compare Mary Robinson's *The Natural Daughter. With Portraits of the Leadenhead Family. A Novel* [London, 1799], in which a 'noble-minded peasant' proves his mettle, and Robinson's anti-Revolutionary theories of social harmony, by rushing to the assistance of a carriage overturned in a raging torrent, despite the malevolent postilion's observation 'that they were aristocrats, and consequently not worth preserving' (II, 185).

<sup>17</sup> Other uses of this trope may be found, for example, in Craik, *Adelaïde de Narbonne*, I, 109, Sarah Wood, *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron* [London, 1800], pp.42-43, and Jane West, *The Loyalists: an Historical Novel* [London, 1813], II, ch.14, to name just a few in all of which the overturning of a carriage introduces our heroines to the decidedly loyalist heroes of the fiction, who right the coach and more often than not simultaneously deliver our heroines from the clutches of a villain. Almost as often it was the task of a hero to rescue a carriage load of passengers from an equally calamitous fate, an attempted highway robbery. See for instance the anonymous *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School* [London, 1803], III, ch.72.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Charlton, *The Parisian; or, Genuine Anecdotes of Distinguished and Noble Characters* [London, 1794], I, 29 and II, 50-60; Edward Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde, a Moral Tale* [London, 1791], pp.278-83.

well this recycling of old conventions in only a slightly reworked guise, especially when compared with the villainy of an earlier French clergyman in the 1789 novel *The Bastille. Or the History of Charles Townly*. The 'Abbé', the proto-vaurien figure who fleeces Charles Townly of his money, sends him to the Bastille when a more lucrative dupe comes along. Heurthofen, appearing in print five years later, has different possibilities. Despite having no *lettre de cachet* with which to imprison our hero without charge, nor, for that matter, a Bastille in which to have him incarcerated, having worked his way up the Jacobin hierarchy, he has no difficulty whatsoever in arranging for his indictment by a Revolutionary Tribunal where a fate even more dreadful than those of the *ancien régime* could be handed down. The one Abbé, as must be immediately obvious, is merely a reiteration of the other, and a figure who would be recycled several more times in the ensuing years, as Maria Edgeworth was to do in 1809, for instance, transforming her Abbé Tracassier into Citoyen Tracassier so that he might use his membership of the Committee of Public Safety to persecute the dauntless Madame de Fleury.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly it was the case that Smith, for one, was requisitioning many typically gothic images even in her 'tendenz' novels. She had done so in *Desmond* (1792), as B. G. MacCarthy had cause to complain since it meant that she had to give equal consideration to the novel under both her 'Gothic Novel' and 'Didactic Novel' headings, and she did so again in *The Banished Man*, in which the ruined châteaux and convents, the appalling oubliettes and crowded gaols, all discovered by D'Alonville in Revolutionary France, bear most of the weight of her newly found anti-Jacobinism. But it was also certainly true, despite MacCarthy's claims to the contrary, that her literary endeavours were not being at all blunted by their politicisation.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the rationale Smith herself provides, if it is to be believed, suggests that she included what might be called her 'anti-Jacobin gothic' for artistic, rather than ideological, reasons. In her 'Avis au Lecteur', which opens the second volume of *The Banished Man*, she informs the reader, perhaps rather disingenuously, that she has turned to the depiction of the real atrocities of France only in order to avoid the charges of plagiarism which might be levelled against what she fears will be construed as her entirely conventional depiction of the usual array of gothic castles and horrid atrocities.<sup>21</sup> Whether we believe her or not, of course, the effect remains the same, and a contempt for the Revolution and for insurgency in general, as well as a regard for the sort of good order to be found in Britain, is insinuated to the reader through these standard literary forms. But what remains most

<sup>19</sup> Poetic justice, we can be sure, will also be reiterated. The charges against both persecutors being identical, the words of a Minister of the French *crown* remain equally valid for both: 'when the allegations against him are proved, he shall repent his having dallied with the weapons of justice, or attempted to wrest the laws from the original intention of their institution, with a view to injure innocence.' Anon., [*The Bastille, or*] *Memoirs of Charles Townly. Written by Himself* [1789; Dublin, 1789], III, 26. Maria Edgeworth, 'Madame de Fleury' in *Tales of Fashionable Life* [London, 1809], II, 253-61.

<sup>20</sup> B. G. MacCarthy, *The Female Pen. Women Writers and Novelists* [1944 and 1947; Cork, 1994], pp.392-94 and 422-23. MacCarthy's claims, made for *Desmond*, that 'Smith used the novel form as a mere framework for her political views' and that 'the doctrinal didacticism is so shameless that the book is less a novel than a social and political tractate', were, of course, the very charges that Smith herself spent preface after preface denying (pp.422 and 392-93).

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Banished Man*, II, iii-vi.

important, in Smith's novel, as elsewhere, is that both the author's fictive and ideological purposes were being served by this kind of remoulding of the conventions of fiction for anti-Jacobin purposes.

In *The Banished Man*, for instance, the reader witnesses all the horrors brought by the Revolution through the eyes of Smith's hero, D'Alonville, who, conventionally, has returned to France to search for his friends and because the object of his affections in Britain seems destined to marry another. At the same time as his observation and growing abhorrence of the Revolution deepens those same disapproving sentiments in the reader, Smith is able to accentuate the sensibility, gallantry, bravery and wisdom of her hero, all essential heroic traits, and to involve him in the adventures which comprise the novel's interest. It was a mutually beneficial relationship, a sort of casual symbiosis which meant that the conventions of the genre could be imbued with an anti-Jacobin signification which far from interfering with their power to engage the reader, could even augment it. It was after all important in any novel, that the hero's fitness to be a hero, or the villain's qualifications to be a villain, were asserted and sustained, and there could no better way of achieving this than by employing their responses to the Revolution, or to political questions in a broader sense, responses which at the same time advanced the author's anti-Jacobin objectives. So, for example, mid-way through Lucas' *Castle of St. Donats* we find Jack Smith, evidently our hero, but thus far in the novel somewhat wayward in his behaviour, entering into a number of brief exchanges with the denizens of a debating society, disputing on subjects as diverse as the verity of religion and the precise date that the nineteenth century will begin. The opinions he gives on each topic, by according with the strictest conservative propriety, simultaneously emphasise his return to the straight and narrow, enhancing his credentials as our hero, as well as furthering Lucas' anti-Jacobin campaign, each strand of the fiction mutually bolstering the other.<sup>22</sup>

Equally, any other convention of the novel could be appropriated to bestow the same reciprocal benefits to an author's artistic and ideological purposes. At one point in Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron*, for instance, verses written by our hero are introduced. It was a habit of protagonists of popular fiction so conventional that it was often ridiculed in their satirical anti-novels, but here we are treated not to a sonnet eulogising the beauty of the object of Adolphus' affections, but to a long poem entitled 'On the FRENCH REVOLUTION', depicting the forlorn Genius of France being basely murdered and true Liberty explaining that she resides only on 'Britannia's Island'.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Adolphus has displayed his refinement every bit as much as if he had extemporised an adoring sonnet by moonlight underneath the window of his lover, and Thomas has introduced an explicit statement of her political principles, rendered less blatant, and perhaps more persuasive, by the medium.

In fact, throughout her novel, Thomas proved herself exceedingly adept at developing her characters along what seem utterly conventional lines but in such a way that they enforced her anti-

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<sup>22</sup> Lucas, *Castle of St. Donats*, II, 237-50.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel. Founded on the French Revolution* [Plymouth, 1795?], I, 234-35.

Jacobin programme whilst simultaneously engaging the reader's interest. Early on in the novel, Adolphus proves his fitness to be our hero, by writing to his friend of the horror he felt at the unfolding events in France and their effect on her innocent inhabitants, concluding only half-apologetically with 'My friend, can you wonder that this Subject runs away with my Pen? Were I not so deeply interested in what relates to my Property, I should feel for the Calamities of my Fellow-creatures' - a perfect expression of his sensibility and his anti-Jacobinism combined. And forming a backdrop for the whole novel, attitudes to the Revolution provide a reference point for each character as they are introduced, their anti-Jacobinism an index of their virtue, for how could we regard a character who blots his letter with tears when he writes of regicide with anything other than sympathetic approval? And when Thomas has this character write 'that our beloved King triumphed over his Murderers', that 'Magnanimity, Fortitude, and Resignation attended him to the last Moment,' and that 'Never shall these Virtues approach his inhuman Destroyers', how could we dissent from her implicit construction of the Revolution?<sup>24</sup>

Laments such as this for Louis XVI, and more particularly for Marie-Antoinette, were of course common not only in novels, so poignant was the image, and so serviceable were their fates for uniting a pleasing pathos with a forceful anti-Jacobinism. Such an integrating process, though, was no longer one of appropriation, for authors like Thomas were not merely taking the tradition of a hero's sensibility from novels and endowing it with a political meaning, but were concurrently introducing a fictional resonance into their political sentiments. The regicide, for example, became an offence not only against political rectitude, but against the code of the novel too. What Thomas, and Smith, and other early anti-Jacobin novelists had developed, in other words, was an amalgamation of their literary and ideological agendas, so that an affront to one became an affront to the other. An intrinsic affinity between conservatism and the novel had been established, and would remain in fiction irrespective of whether individual novelists produced individual novels as deliberate propaganda or simply as an attempt to colour their fiction with the brightest pigments that contemporary life could offer, the fate of the French royal family offering a welcome alternative to the story of a persecuted damsel or another standard object of solicitude, the émigrées providing an interesting addition to the usual denizens of Vauxhall or Ranelagh, or a setting in Revolutionary France furnishing, as Smith had claimed, a good excuse not to have to paint the usual assortment of ruined castles and listless ghosts. The symbiotic relationship, the evolution of which we have been tracing, became reified into a durable affinity, and a whole genre, and not merely a handful of individual tropes and images, was appropriated for the purpose of the anti-Jacobins.

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, I, 36 and II, 187.



## 2 *Anti-Jacobinism's affinity with the novel*

What I shall be suggesting in this section is that, as well as many individual novelists quickly enlisting in the war against Jacobinism, it was also a cause in which the novel itself appeared to take sides. The premise upon which this involvement rested was that Jacobinism, in all of its forms, was not merely an abomination, but was an abomination that was anathema to all that had always held dear by the novel, its writers and its readers. The question remains, however, of whether this affinity between anti-Jacobinism and the novel was inherent in the form, and merely capitalised on by conservative writers, or whether it was an alignment that they purposely manufactured.

Jacobinism, of course, as it was understood in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had been defined by its opponents, and it was a definition that was open to continual refinement to suit the developing condemnatory strategies of its antagonists. Previous chapters have already examined how Jacobinism's two most prominent manifestations - the Revolution in France, and new philosophy in Britain - were represented in a manner that made them vulnerable targets for attack both by and for novelists, but it is a process that requires further scrutiny here because Jacobinism was also constructed as the natural enemy of the novel. In large part, novelists inherited this conceptualisation from the great progenitor of anti-Jacobinism, Edmund Burke, but as we shall see, they were not slow to endorse and perfect his synthesis.

Most obviously, and most influentially, Burke had set up the affinity between the tradition of the novel and the anti-Revolution cause with his *Reflections on the Revolution* of 1790. His critics, as is well-known, were quick to point out that the chief fault of the *Reflections* was its resemblance to a novel, or, according to Paine, a piece of theatre, rather than a reasoned political treatise, and it remains very evident that Burke had, in much of his tirade, appropriated a fictional style for his description of the Revolution and of its assault on the French queen in particular.<sup>25</sup> The effect of this appropriation was to make the Revolution an assault on the very values of the novel, for the notional old and proper order that had been violated by the Revolutionaries according to Burke, had long been at least as central to the philosophy of the eighteenth-century novel as it had become to his political universe. The novel, in its conventional form, possessed a system of values which may have varied a little, but fundamentally resolved itself into an unstated but well-understood code which exactly coincided with what Burke conveniently denominated chivalry. It was largely based on the capacity and capability of protagonists, acting on

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<sup>25</sup> 'I cannot consider Mr. Burke's book in scarcely any other light than a dramatic performance; and he must, I think, have considered it in the same light himself, by the poetical liberties he has taken of omitting some facts, distorting others, and making the machinery bend to produce a stage effect', wrote Paine in the *Rights of Man* (*The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Philip S. Foner [New York, 1945], I, 267-68). It was an opinion shared by many commentators both at the time and since, as has been best emphasised by James T. Boulton's *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* [London, 1963], pp.97-133, 144-46 and 198-206.

behalf of readers, to perceive and resist violations of honour, propriety and innocence, its chief ingredients being, therefore, the sensibility and heroism with which any novel-reader would be familiar.

When Burke famously lamented that the age of chivalry was gone, murdered by the Revolution, and the age of 'sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators had succeeded', it was a conception that by default made novels anti-Jacobin. Fiction's heroes had long displayed, would continue to display, and had little choice but to display, exactly those characteristics which Burke complained had been exterminated by the Revolution - 'that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, ... that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage while it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched,' - all these were qualities which delineated the heroes of novels, but upon which Burke had just conferred a new political signification.<sup>26</sup> Adulterating neither the marketable conventions of the novel, nor Burke's lucid anti-Jacobinism, it was a synthesis that was bound to produce fiction with a conservative purpose, whether it was the author's intention to do so or not.

The most obvious expressions of Burke's influence on fiction seem almost acts of homage. Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, one of Burke's most ardent admirers, did not even trouble himself to change his mentor's form of words. 'The days of chivalry are over!' he has Arthur Fitz-Albini declare, before taking the opportunity to use Burke's premise to emphasise his hero's heroism and his hero's heroism to emphasise Burke's correctness: 'But some of the sentiments of chivalry shall not be over for me; because I believe them to be founded in virtue and consummate wisdom.'<sup>27</sup> As ever, Brydges was being blunt, but the association he was making between the chivalry of his hero and the chivalry that Burke had infused into anti-Jacobinism was taken up by numerous other novelists. So, for instance, in her *Banished Man*, Smith used the execution of Louis XVI to show the sensibility of one of her characters, but was led naturally into a fervent anti-Jacobinism as a result. 'This last infamous murder!' she has him exclaim '- my brain burns when I think of it: ... - I call upon the powers of vengeance, to sweep the nation guilty of such an atrocity from the earth.'<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. VIII, ed. L. G. Mitchell [Oxford, 1989], p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini, A Novel* [1798; London, 1799], I, 271-72. Arthur's foolish interlocutor, Mr Brougham, goes on to quote disparagingly the very passage of Burke's *Reflections* from which Arthur draws his opinions ('It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France ...'), which, Brydges interrupts to say, 'I have so often heard East-Indians [i.e. nabobs] select for their laughter.' Arthur immediately leaps to Burke's defence, perfectly exhibiting Brydges' technique of emphasising by association his hero's gallantry and judgment: "'Mr Brougham," answered Fitz-Albini, in a firm, collected, voice, "though I will not pretend to compliment either the tone or accent in which you have spoken, yet I shall not hesitate to declare, that the passage, on which persons of your cast of mind have endeavoured to throw so much ridicule, is one of the most beautiful of a work, which, not only in eloquence, but in wisdom, stands perhaps as high as mere human abilities have ever produced"' (I, 274). So central did this Burkean notion of chivalry eventually become to fiction, indeed, that Eaton Stannard Barrett thought fit to satirise it in his parodic novel, *The Heroine* [1813; London, 1909], in which an impostor woos the Heroine by having recourse to the decidedly Burkean 'I thought ten thousand flowerets would have leapt from their beds to offer you a nosegay. But the age of gallantry is past, that of merchants, placemen, and fortune-hunters has succeeded, and the glory of Cupid is extinguished for ever' (p.60).

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *Banished Man*, IV, 87-88, 81.

It is a point best illustrated, though, by tracing the progress of Burke's famous apostrophe to Marie-Antoinette, the epitome of both his portrayal of the Revolution as anti-chivalric and its affinity with the novel. 'I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult,' Burke had goaded in the *Reflections*, and his exhortation was not lost on at least one true Englishman, the stalwart uncle of Ellesmere in Smith's *Banished Man*, a character introduced to the reader, and recommended as a wise and benign figure, as one who

spoke in his turn of the affairs of France like a man of sense; and expressed his wish that he could go out against the cursed fellows, who were base enough to use a woman, and a pretty woman too, as they had treated the Queen of France.<sup>29</sup>

Again, this symbiotic relationship was wonderfully serviceable for a novelist like Smith, both her characterisation and her anti-Jacobinism being mutually benefited by association with one another. Ellesmere's uncle was now identified as a suitable mentor for our hero, his opinion on the Revolution vouching for that. But, more insidiously, such a passage also forced the reader to recognise, in case he or she had ever harboured any doubts, that Marie-Antoinette was an innocent, irreproachable, persecuted and pretty woman, exactly as according to Burke's portrait, an assertion that had now been endorsed by the revelation that she was the latest in a long line of novelistic heroines whose virtue and honour could never be impugned.

Novelists continued to mediate their animus towards the Revolution through Burke's description of the attack on Marie-Antoinette for some considerable time, principally indicting the Revolution, therefore, exactly as he had done, on charges relating to its offenses against chivalry. Burke's celebrated description of the events of 6 October 1789, the assault on, and flight of, the queen was already a passage resplendent with almost every conceivable gothic technique, from banditti to secret passages, from the loyal servant faithfully guarding his mistress to her scantily-clad escape, and so required little emendation.<sup>30</sup> If anything, its many fictional reiterations were inferior, or at least less highly coloured, than the original version, even though it had appeared in a political treatise. Helen Craik, for instance, cast her Adelaide de Narbonne in the rôle of Marie-Antoinette, confronting her with Revolutionary persecutors:

The door of the house was burst open, with loud and fearful imprecations of vengeance.  
I attempted to rise; my feet refused their office; I sunk again into my chair; my half-closing eyes glanced upon a blood-stained villain, whose reeking sword was

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<sup>29</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 126-27. Smith, *Banished Man*, II, 139.

<sup>30</sup> The Queen of France, 'after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter,' modestly lay down, as any self-respecting heroine periodically did, 'to indulge nature in a few hours of respite, and troubled, melancholy repose. From this sleep she was first startled by the voice of the sentinel at her door, who cried out to her, to save herself by flight - that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give - that they were upon him, and he was dead. Instantly, he was cut down. A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with blood, rushed into the chamber... and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence the persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked, and through ways unknown to the murderers had escaped to seek refuge...'  
*Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 121-22.

unsheathed, and ready for destruction! - I saw no more! terror came to my relief, and happily rendered me insensible for the present to the horrors of further observation.<sup>31</sup>

The 'blood-stained villain' whom Craik describes plays a dual rôle, being at once the sort of conventional villain who might have been spotted charging around the corridors of half-ruined castles for several decades'-worth of novels, but also one of the proto-Revolutionaries whom Burke had represented in the act of bursting in on Marie-Antoinette at Versailles. The rôles were interchangeable, the consequence being that the Revolution was indictable as an offense against the code of the novel, its agents being figured as a depraved race of Montonis and Manfreds, whilst the villains of Craik's fiction simultaneously had their guilt augmented by their implied affinity to Robespierre, Marat, Collot D'Herbois, and all the other Jacobins whom, since Burke's original vignette of the brigands of 6 October 1789, had been exhibited to the British reading public for their detestation.

Of course, it was not only the Revolution itself that the anti-Jacobins were anxious to demonstrate to be inherently anti-chivalric, but also the new philosophy which had inspired revolution in France and might yet do so in Britain. In *The Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, for instance, we are shown an elderly Prussian soldier, evidently shocked to find that ten thousand swords did not leap from their scabbards to defend the honour of a beautiful and persecuted young heroine, still inevitably figured in the image of Marie-Antoinette, and that he was the only man prepared to escort such a creature out of Revolutionary France. 'In my juvenile days,' he says, 'half the garrison of Berlin would have set off at a moment's notice too [*sic*] rescue a weak female from the grasp of a villain;' but now, he laments, they 'are all *philosophised*, I think they call it.'<sup>32</sup> The French army, naturally, was even worse than the Prussian, at least according to Pye's Jean Le Noir who shows it riddled with a not merely enervating, but barbaric, new philosophy. In familiar terms, Le Noir incriminates himself and his countrymen by boasting that 'the age of chivalry is past with us,' and that,

our soldiers, when impelled by the sense of the sacred duties of freedom and equality, are neither checked by the commands of officers, the respect to rank and virtue, the tears of kneeling beauty, or the cries of weeping infancy ...

It is just as unsurprising to find that a British officer answers Le Noir with sentiments which also echo the Burkean union of personal and political chivalry: 'A soldier who disobeys his commanding officer, and who can be capable of using any woman, and especially a pretty woman, ill,' says the gallant anti-Jacobin, 'is a scoundrel that ought to be kicked out of company'.<sup>33</sup>

Envisaging Jacobinism in terms of its opposition to the underlying code of the novel meant that the confirmed novel-reader, who had, we must presume, turned to these novels in search of familiar

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<sup>31</sup> Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne*, III, 245.

<sup>32</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc*, II, 256.

<sup>33</sup> Pye, *Democrat*, II, 150-51 and 151-52.



gratifications, would unquestionably have been affronted by the Revolution and its aims and progress, and by a new philosophy which appeared to go so decidedly against the grain of traditional fictions. The campaign to effect this, though, went further than simply reiterating and embellishing Burke's conception of Jacobinism as anti-chivalric. It soon becomes apparent, in fact, that the central aim of anti-Jacobin literary satire was to expose new philosophy as inherently opposed to the conventions of the novel, conventions upon which the popularity of novels rested and which, within the context of the novel, were prized beyond value.

When, for instance, Herdi Lok, the new philosopher in Sophia King's *Waldorf* (1798), tries to persuade his pupil that he has 'too much sensibility,' that this sensibility is merely pride, and a traitor that murders his peace, and that 'these workings of pride are the ferment of the heart, and will soon subside,' they were sentiments that would arouse antagonism in both the anti-Jacobin, taught to privilege feeling over reason in deciding moral and political questions, and in the novel-reader, equally used to regarding sensibility and the workings of the heart as the be all and end all of their heroes' and heroines' behaviour. Likewise, when Lok asserted that marriage 'was invented from policy, *not* principle, to keep a degree of peace and order among the turbulent: like a bit in the mouth of a restive horse', it could only be interpreted as a slap in the face to those readers who expected their novels to provide them with a marriage, or preferably more, their significance and splendour inflated out of all proportion to the realities of life.<sup>34</sup>

Likewise, Edward Sayer took pains to emphasise not just that Jacobinism ran contrary to the novel paradigm, but that Jacobinism was entirely incompatible with the established expectations of novel-readers. It was a dreadful warning he meant to provide when half way through his *Lindor and Adelaïde* he has his hero dream that if the Revolution continues in its attempts to smash all the altars, he will not be able to marry Adelaïde.<sup>35</sup> When Lindor dies at the hands of the Revolutionaries, sending Adelaïde spiralling towards death herself, the way in which Sayer has shown the Revolution baulking the anticipated, and conventionally inevitable, closure of the novel - their marriage - could surely not have gone unnoticed by the sort of reader who had presumably deliberately chosen to read a novel such as this, the sort of reader whom Sayer had deliberately tried to draw in with a title as indicative of a straightforward love-story as *Lindor and Adelaïde*.

Authors such as Elizabeth Hamilton, in her *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), and Amelia Opie, with *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), also seem to have eagerly embarked on the same deliberate strategy of demonstrating Jacobinism to be intrinsically opposed to everything held dear by novel-readers. The new philosophy of their would-be heroines does nothing but frustrate the expectations of a reader, and whether with tragic or comic consequences, it is upon this frustration that the satire rests. In *Modern Philosophers*, for instance, Bridgetina Botherim is everything that a heroine should not be, and, with the

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<sup>34</sup> King, *Waldorf*, I, 101 and 34.

<sup>35</sup> Sayer, *Lindor and Adelaïde*, pp.216-19.

possible exception of her unattractiveness, which Hamilton continually emphasises, has been made so by the new philosophy that she has espoused. Although this new philosophy is fairly assiduously foot-noted, it is actually rather difficult to identify of what exactly it is constituted, most of it consisting of empty and pretentious rhetoric. The one doctrine that Bridgetina does pursue wholeheartedly is the right of a woman to chase a lover for herself, an opinion that Hamilton attributes to Mary Hays. Not only does this behaviour itself fly in the face of the sort of deportment expected of a heroine - and Harriet Orwell, patient, passive, not to say supine, provides the parallel, contrasting example - but it sets up a number of episodes which Hamilton makes into comic inversions of the tender scenes the reader has come to expect, such as that in which Bridgetina finds the object of her affections, Gabriel Gubbles, looking into the mouth of an old woman sitting on the floor to have a tooth pulled out. 'The attitude was charming', she says, 'the scene was interesting; it was impressive, tender, melancholy, sublime. My suffocating sensibilities returned.' Clearly the opinions of Hays, to which, Hamilton insists, Bridgetina was 'indebted for some of her finest thoughts', were being chiefly ridiculed for their laughable defiance of the established patterns and propriety of the novel.<sup>36</sup>

Bridgetina comes to no harm in *Modern Philosophers*, her face, as B. G. MacCarthy puts it, being 'a padlock to her virtue'.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, the fate of the beautiful and demure Julia, whom the reader is encouraged to expect to be a heroine of the traditional variety, is tragic, her adoption of Vallaton's new philosophy resulting in her abandonment, prostitution and death. Julia would have made a perfect heroine, Hamilton implies, but her new philosophy has destroyed both her felicity and the reader's, who most unusually is denied the satisfaction of witnessing the weddings of the two leading characters, having to make do with the somewhat dull union of Harriet and Henry. Hamilton, in fact, labours the point rather, but demonstrates that she was fully cognizant of why readers read novels and how she was disappointing them. In her concluding chapter she anticipates the complaints of her readers that there have not been nearly enough weddings. All the young characters at least should be married off, Hamilton recognises, and, she says, she knows full well that her readers would not have read the book all through had they not wondered who Bridgetina was to marry. Surely Vallaton and Myope will reform, she hears them cry. Nothing is so common. And undoubtedly Vallaton will turn out to be the son of a great lord, or Myope win the lottery or discover some rich, unknown uncle, just returned from the West Indies. But such conventions cannot be fulfilled, Hamilton laments, for, she explains, Vallaton will die on the guillotine whilst Myope is to become a Swedenborgian, and already has quite respectable visions. We are left to conclude that her didactic mission has not merely overcome the demands of fiction, but that she has

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<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* [2nd edn., London, 1800], II, 90 and 85.

<sup>37</sup> MacCarthy, *The Female Pen*, p.432. MacCarthy's summary of the plot of *Modern Philosophers*, pp.431-34, perceptively emphasises the ways in which Hamilton sought to show how Bridgetina's behaviour and opinions impede the traditional course of a novel.

deliberately and assiduously striven to emphasise the incompatibility of the new philosophy she has been attacking with the whole genre of the novel.<sup>38</sup>

It was a ploy used more grimly by Opie, whose *Adeline Mowbray* did not seek to excite comedy by baffling the traditional course of the novel, but, far from it, detailed her heroine's gradual but inevitable descent into a protracted despondency and death which Opie made clear was necessarily resultant from her aberrant new philosophical opinions on the folly of matrimony. Adeline enters into the unconsecrated union with the new philosopher Glenmurray on principle, refusing even his urgings to wed. They are ostracised, cast off by Adeline's mother, and, upon Glenmurray's death, Adeline is forced into a wretched marriage with the unfaithful Berrendale. Later she is deserted by her husband, who feels justified in doing this because of his wife's past, and left to die repentant. In a sense, Opie had written an anti-novel, and certainly it is difficult to imagine how she could have further disconcerted the confident expectations of a seasoned novel-reader. Adeline's attraction to Glenmurray, essentially a rake licensed by his new philosophical beliefs, is difficult enough to accept, but her rejection of his offers to legalise their relationship is almost unprecedented in the annals of the novel. The marriage that Opie does provide, to Berrendale, is the antithesis of those that traditionally close novels, and would be enough to put any reader off the institution had not Opie made clear that this unhappy union was solely the result of Adeline's misguided principles. New philosophy, Opie painstakingly shows, is entirely incompatible with the established patterns conventionally woven by novels.

*Adeline Mowbray* and *Modern Philosophers* were at least partly conceived as attacks on Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays respectively, and this suggests that the incompatibility of Jacobinism and the novel was perhaps actually inherent in Jacobinism rather than the deliberate creation of its opponents. Indeed, the idea that radical thought actually *did* run contrary to the conventions of the novel might be supported by Paine's *Rights of Man* and much of the rest of the flurry of rejoinders to Burke's *Reflections*. From these it can appear that radicalism in Britain did indeed base itself on reasoned arguments and did indeed attack the sensibility and chivalry that Burke had championed, in a way to which all the traditions of novels were naturally resistant. After all, the generality of novels were more or less entirely the 'plumage', 'the showy resemblance' of sentiment striking the imagination that Burke was irresponsibly grieving for at the expense of the 'dying bird', the real distress, according to Paine's eloquent complaint.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, III, 352-61.

<sup>39</sup> *Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, I, 260. Clearly, sensibility is a problematic term in many ways, but especially difficult to use with precision in a political context since both radicals and conservatives sought to label their opponents as the true disciples of sensibility during the Revolution crisis. The fact that Paine could accuse Burke of sensibility, but that an anti-Jacobin like, say, George Walker could accuse radicalism of being a doctrine based almost entirely on sensibility hints that by the 1790s, the word had become little more than a term of abuse. It was a particularly useful one too, since it was generally used to refer to the expression of sympathy for the wrong thing, the emphasis being on the error, not the sympathy. Thus Paine could say that Burke pitied the plumage, not the dying bird, and Walker could arraign a new philosopher like Dr Alogos for pitying a lapwing being preyed on by a hawk, and going so far as to shoot the hawk, but only to find that the lapwing immediately set about a concerted attack on a worm (*Vagabond*, I, 2-3), Alogos' sentiment being wrong because it interferes with the natural order and because, like all new philosophy, it addressed itself to chimerical wrongs instead of real distress which was best alleviated not by theoretical but

It was something that the Jacobin novels, those of Holcroft or Hays, say, had only emphasised, the often-satirised reasoned or proactive love of their protagonists (one thinks of the heroines of *Anna St. Ives* or *Emma Courtney*), or the virtually unique absence of a love interest plot at all in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, so often seeming to go against the grain of the conventional novel. *Emma Courtney*, indeed, was one of the starkest warnings against sensibility to appear in the 1790s.

On the other hand, though, anti-Jacobin novelists surely did manufacture Jacobinism's challenge to the traditions of the novel, or at least emphasise it out of all reality. As we have been observing, they appropriated the Revolution and new philosophy to play the villainous rôles in their fiction, using Jacobins to play their rakes, Wollstonecraftian feminists to play their coquettes, and new philosophical propositions to take the place of those specious arguments or base desires that had traditionally persuaded women to an elopement or men to a rape. There were also whole novels like *Waldorf*, *Modern Philosophers* and *Adeline Mowbray* designed to incriminate new philosophy by showing its irreconcilability to fiction's values. But their campaign to construct a Jacobinism that went against all the traditions of the novel, and thus could only disgust the reader who had picked up their novels in search of customary fictional pleasures, is perhaps most evident in individual episodes, which clearly appear to have been inserted into the fiction for no other purpose than to establish the anathematical relationship between Jacobinism and the novel.

Several such interpolated episodes are conspicuous in Walker's *Vagabond*. As we have already had cause to notice, one of the most over-used clichés of the novel was the sudden discovery of a protagonist's true parents. And in *The Vagabond*, such a scene is duly included, but Walker does so to demonstrate the insufferable offence that Jacobinism offers to all that the novel has held sacred. Frederick's new philosophy impels him to hold up a stage-coach, and although he fails, he manages to shoot the occupant of the carriage. When he is apprehended later that night, he discovers, as if Walker had attempted a sickening parody of this fictional convention, that he has shot and killed his own mother, a dénouement which indicts Frederick and his new philosophy for crimes against literature as well as against morality and good sense.<sup>40</sup>

Even after this Frederick remains likeable enough, and, one feels sure that, Tom Jones-like, he will eventually overcome his immature political quixotism and - conventionally - marry either Amelia, his childhood sweet-heart, or Laura, daughter of his mentor Dr Alogos, a figure deliberately made attractive and sensible enough to effect his reformation. Walker, though, brutally dispels our convention-bred confidence as he has Frederick repeatedly commit the most outrageous crime within the novel's ambit by

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practical benevolence. The important point to realise however, is that however much anti-Jacobins ridiculed and attempted to debunk sensibility they were still producing novels that were dominated by it. See Janet Todd, *Sensibility. An Introduction* [London, 1986], especially pp.129-46, for a discussion of this confusion.

<sup>40</sup> 'Ill-starred boy,' explains Frederick's father, 'Providence directed your arms against your parents, that you might behold, in full light, the horror of your actions, and repent.' Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 220-25.



attempting to rape first Amelia, then Laura. Frederick's justifications on the former occasion are revealing. 'Had I attended to the old fashioned doctrine of *honour*,' he boasts, 'I might have refrained from desiring the girl myself', adding, 'Your church people, who believe they have souls, might indeed be deterred from violating innocence and plundering the weak; but I rejoice to think these notions are growing obsolete'. In fact, Walker has suggested not only the incompatibility of new philosophy with the patterns of the novel, but, contrariwise, an inherent affinity between the honour and religion Frederick repudiates, and the conventional structures of the novel.<sup>41</sup>

This supposedly innate affinity that Walker had posited, in which the conservative and 'old-fashioned' values of honour and religion underwrite the sort of behaviour that leads to the conventionally fulfilling novel closures, was repeatedly emphasised by anti-Jacobin novelists with all zeal that they had shown to drive a wedge between Jacobinism and the novel. Their brazen management of fiction's conventions continued, and could be even more blatant than their sustained attempts to show that Jacobinism meant a stop to happy endings. At one level, for instance, authors simply invested the standard formalities of fictional courtship with an anti-Jacobin agenda. The author of *The Citizen's Daughter* (1804), for example, quite candidly admitted to infusing an unashamed anti-Jacobinism into the traditional novel formula when he or she portrayed the novel's heroine explaining, at the beginning of the novel, that it was her prayer 'to meet with a man who has liberality enough to judge only from experience, without being biassed by the fallacious doctrines of pretended philosophy.'<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, the fact that, in anti-Jacobin fiction, loyalty had simply (but none the less effectively) replaced, or at least joined, gallantry, refinement, fortune and good-looks, as the central traits of a successful suitor, the signifier of a hero's or heroine's entitlement to that rôle, was constantly and unashamedly made manifest. Thus we find the father of Sophie Campbell in *Adolphus de Biron* accepting her suitor, Alexander Bruce, only because he is loyal to Britain and her constitution, and explaining,

I protest to you, Sir, if one of these WRONG-HEADS who profess their Admiration of the French Revolution, were to propose an Alliance with my Family, I should reject his Proposals with Disdain.<sup>43</sup>

Such a rejection is the course of action taken by Mr Sidney's uncle in Bisset's *Douglas*, a man of sense who denies his nephew the financial wherewithal to marry because his political errors will make him an unsuitable husband. Bisset cruelly denies his readers the satisfaction of a triple wedding until Sidney

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<sup>41</sup> Walker, *Vagabond*, II, 43 and I, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Anon., *The Citizen's Daughter* [London, 1804], pp.46-47.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, II, 177. The point is emphasised by a shadowy character whom Thomas makes occasional reference to in the novel but does not flesh out, and who apparently was intended to form an instructive contrast to Bruce, to be one of the 'WRONG-HEADS' of whom Mr Campbell warns, since he 'speaks of Liberty very much'. From Thomas' sketchy outline of the character, he seems to be a Mr Rivers, Sophie Campbell's suitor before Bruce, and whom, of course, she had rejected (I, 148-49).

finally renounces his Jacobinism.<sup>44</sup> Alternatively, but still exposing the same attempt to make courtship an ideological process, a healthy anti-Jacobinism could be the best of recommendations, and would always help a hero to get his girl. It is something we see when Charles, Bisset's hero, discourses on Burke's wisdom in the presence of the object of his affections, Isabella, exhibiting his own 'great knowledge and force of reason' by supporting all Burke's views, so that not only were 'the countenances of his father and mother ... filled with delight,' but 'Isabella hardly refrained from tears of pleasure and admiration of what she conceived his extraordinary powers.'<sup>45</sup>

But the anti-Jacobins went further than this relatively uncomplicated appropriation of fictional conventions. They worked their anti-Jacobinism into the fabric of the novel, and it is because of this that the novel itself could appear to take sides in the ideological conflict which they were fighting. Political loyalty, for instance, became not merely a new quality to be esteemed in a protagonist and to recommend them as suitors, but actually became the very reason for their weddings and for marriage in general. Pye explains this most clearly in his *Aristocrat* of 1799. Mr Aldworth, having just found Hamilton to be his long-lost nephew, offers much of his fortune to enable the speedy union of his nephew and Lydia, a conventional scenario in itself. The only condition, apparently, is that Hamilton is forced to listen to Aldworth's (that is to say, Pye's) long sermon expounding the anti-Jacobin conception of marriage, and Pye's decoding of the institution. It is important enough to be given in full:

But remember, young man, your union with a lovely woman, and the prospect of further endearing connections, give you a greater interest in the welfare of the society that protects you. The solitary being who has no peculiar attachments, such as I was till yesterday, will, from principle and the point of honour, respect the constitution of his country; but he cannot feel the same gratitude for the protection that secures to him only a comfortless existence, as the man does who has objects of regard dearer than himself. The storm of sedition sounds dreadful indeed to him who has a wife and children. The husband and the father have a deep stake in the welfare of the country; they have given pledges for their loyalty, taking that word in its most comprehensive sense.<sup>46</sup>

Pye's claims were hardly new. This kind of stake-holding was a central tenet of most variants of conservative political philosophy as it developed in the late eighteenth century and especially in response to the Revolution, the idea being that the more one had invested in society, the more one would fight to

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<sup>44</sup> 'Indeed, his greatest error,' we are told, 'was the adoption of jacobinical principles in politics, religion, and morals; and that was what chiefly displeased his uncle. These I am convinced, after experiencing great inconvenience from their adoption, he has now thoroughly renounced'. Bisset, *Douglas*, IV, 348.

<sup>45</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, II, 208-209. Bisset himself, of course, had produced an admiring biography of Burke.

<sup>46</sup> Pye, *The Aristocrat, a Novel* [London, 1799], II, 119-20. Aldworth's continuation of the lecture once more emphasises that Lydia's respect for her husband will rest only on his active anti-Jacobinism - to be displayed in fighting the French: 'But young soldier,' he addresses Hamilton, 'you must not think of quitting a profession, on which the safety of your country depends, at a crisis like this. God forbid that the amiable Lydia should mourn your fall! But that is in the hand of Heaven. It is in your own that she shall not lament your dishonour' (II, 120). Compare Charlotte Palmer's *It Is, and It Is Not. A Novel* [London, 1792], II, 142-44, which is even more explicit in urging wives not to hinder their military husbands in continuing to fight against the Revolutionary menace.

protect it.<sup>47</sup> Also, Burke had written that 'We begin our public affections in our families,' and that 'No cold relation is a zealous citizen', the whole of the *Reflections on the Revolution* stressing the threat Jacobinism posed to familial structures and, concomitantly, the importance of these structures to the welfare of British society.<sup>48</sup> But what Pye was exposing was of central importance to the novel. When he closed his novel with the usual array of marriages, and added a codicil to the effect that even those left unmarried would soon be induced into the same state of felicity as their friends, and when he insisted that this was 'a consummation devoutly to be wished, as we are decidedly of the opinion that it is not good for Man to be alone', he was making an ideological, as well as literary, judgement.<sup>49</sup> He had not only appropriated the central convention of the novel for the anti-Jacobin cause, but had made it seem inherently anti-Jacobin. Marriage, he had showed, cemented loyalty. This was its purpose, his readers could now see. Marriage, as it occurred in fiction, now had its meaning, a meaning which retrospectively rationalised the importance accorded to marriage in the popular novel, and which therefore claimed the novel to be inherently anti-Jacobin. Pye and others, in fact, were claiming the novel as an innately anti-Jacobin form.

Returning to *Adolphus de Biron*, for instance, we can see how Ann Thomas determinedly envisaged the novel form she had taken up as inherently anti-Jacobin. Her novel was conventional enough in its main dynamic, which remained the marrying off of all the younger generation of characters so that they might reap the rewards of the virtues they had demonstrated in the face of tribulation. Traditionally, in one of Austen's novels say, we would expect the marriages that close the novel to unite the virtues of the hero and heroine and to eradicate the errors of the older generation, whatever they may have been. Thus, in a general sense, the flaws of the society which had kept the couple apart for so long would be redeemed. In anti-Jacobin novels, though, the protagonists' unions became much more specifically redemptive. As Captain M--- puts it, speaking of his nephew, 'To see him happily settled is the Wish of my Heart', a conventional enough sentiment, until further explained in new terms:

Heaven grant, that not only our Wards, but also all the British Youth may excel in every Quality which can make them good and virtuous! In a word may they be sincere Christians, and loyal Subjects, which will make them a Blessing to their Country, and avert the Evils with now oppress a neighbouring Kingdom!<sup>50</sup>

As we have already seen, Alexander Bruce, the nephew, is finally accepted as the husband of Sophie Campbell because of his loyalty, but here we realise that Thomas was insisting that the marriages that end her novel would not only reward the loyalty of her protagonists, would not only redeem their foolish parents, but would rescue a foolish nation. Unlike, say, the unions of Catherine and Henry in *Northanger*

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<sup>47</sup> For a brief summary of this stake-holding theory see H. T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* [Basingstoke, 1995], pp.264-65.

<sup>48</sup> *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, 244.

<sup>49</sup> Pye, *Aristocrat*, II, 194.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, I, 159 and 159-60.

*Abbey*, or of Elizabeth and D'Arcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, Ann Thomas' weddings, though retaining their position as the fulfilling fruition of the novel, do not merely amend the personal errors of an older generation, but cleanse, heal and revivify British society as a whole.

For just one further illustration of the way in which conservative authors attempted to recast the most basic of fictive conventions as innately anti-Jacobin, we might turn to Samuel Egerton Brydges for a characteristically conspicuous attempt to weave anti-Jacobin dogma into the fabric of the novel which the genre had bequeathed him. It had always been a central tenet of the novel, of course, that a hero or heroine could marry only one of their own social, and indeed financial, status. Hence, any reader of late eighteenth century fiction must become used to the sudden discoveries of a protagonist's real parentage or their unforeseen procurement of a fortune, whether through inheritance, the lottery, or the generosity of an anonymous friend, so that the objections of their beloved's family are obviated and the wedding permitted to proceed. It was the rôle Aldworth had played in Pye's *Aristocrat*, for instance, who, besides providing the accompanying lecture on the virtues of matrimony, dispenses money, and aristocratic connections, all round, so that each protagonist may wed his or her intended. In Brydges' *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, however, we find this convention not only happily embraced, but newly rationalised into an ideological stricture, the author implying that the literary convention had always existed because of the ideological, not artistic, satisfaction it provided. Thus, any of his characters foolish enough to make an uneven match are treated with contempt, their wretchedness clearly exhibited for the edification of his readers, as is the case with Mr Bracey, a country gentleman himself, but arrogant enough to imagine that rank meant nothing in modern society. 'He had probably discovered,' Brydges sneers, 'that what he and too many others deemed the prejudices of narrow minds were founded in the deepest experience, and deepest insight into the characters and constitution of human nature', adding emphatically 'that the confusion of ranks and conditions in matrimony is almost always productive of misery.' For Brydges, and, he would have it, for all those authors who had ever matched two protagonists possessed of noble lineage and secure incomes, this was a matter of great relevance to a nation in danger during a time of Revolution, the careful management of pedigrees its best defence against Jacobinism. 'Birth is inseparable from the person,' he wrote, 'If the barrier of birth is thrown down, a restless and wicked ambition will never cease to disturb the quiet of society.'<sup>51</sup> In a stroke, Brydges had made the entire tradition of the novel, with its insistence on finding fitting partners for its heroes and heroines, anti-Jacobin in its central endeavour. It had become, to paraphrase Austen, not merely a truth universally acknowledged, but a truth of the greatest importance to the safety of the nation, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife of similar status.

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<sup>51</sup> Brydges, *Arthur Fitz-Albini*, I, 207 and 297.



### 3 *The novel commandeers the conventions of anti-Jacobinism*

What Pye, Thomas and Brydges had been contending for was a natural affinity between the novel and the sort of anti-Jacobinism they were deliberately implanting in it, and their success in this enterprise was such as to make it appear as if the novel itself had taken sides in the debate on the Revolution. In a sense, the anti-Jacobin novelists were right, and such an affinity had always existed, inherent within the novel tradition. After all, despite the vociferous complaints of critics of the genre, almost all eighteenth century fiction had been based on a Christian and generally conservative moral code that broadly matched up to that of the anti-Jacobins, as well as having always privileged a felt, rather than a reasoned, response to all questions of belief and action. Following Burke's idealisation of chivalry, by which it was transformed into a politically conservative quality, the bond between fiction and anti-Jacobinism became even closer. Yet, many anti-Jacobin novelists themselves had also worked hard to appropriate the conventions of the novel for their own purposes, deliberately aligning many of the most fundamental conventions of the novel with their anti-Jacobin agenda. And so successful were they in doing this, in establishing what in retrospect could appear an apparently inherent affinity, that in the early years of the nineteenth century, a new amalgam emerged in novels in which their anti-Jacobinism was still present, but without that sense of overt didacticism which had originally motivated it. However artificial the affinity that they had constructed in their own novels, the anti-Jacobins of the '90s succeeded in developing an intrinsic alliance between the novel and conservatism in the next generation of fictions. The anti-Jacobinism of these novels was the same, familiar from the highly committed novels of the '90s and the early 1800s, but it had come adrift from its original ideological mooring. Thus, as we shall see, although the anti-Jacobin *effectiveness* of this second generation of conservative novels was scarcely dimmed, its anti-Jacobin *intent* had all but disappeared.

In essence, whilst during the early years of novelists' response to the Revolution crisis, many authors had hit upon the strategy of silently requisitioning already established novelistic conventions and imbuing them with a new anti-Jacobin mission, later novelists did not quite appropriate, but rather absorbed, a number of themes, images and characters that anti-Jacobin novelists had already used. In this section, it is the largely literary motivations behind this absorption that concerns us, offering an explanation of why the production of what was still definably anti-Jacobin fiction, but which lacked the ideological commitment of the '90s, continued until Waterloo and beyond. Simply put, a central motivation for this assimilation was that the literary possibilities offered by the Revolution and Jacobinism, as they had been developed in fiction since the fall of the Bastille, were too good for a novelist to miss, or almost so. It took great fortitude, for instance, for Jane West to deny herself the use of a French invasion, in which, she frivolously says, she might have 'brought over troops of democrats in

balloons, or diving-bells, to have driven all the aristocrats to one centre' when it was necessary to the plot of her *Infidel Father* to gather all her characters together in one place for the dénouement. The serious point to be read into West's flippant self-congratulation, though, is that an invasion by the French had become just another convention of the novel by 1802, fit to be set alongside the use of ghosts, banditti or sea-monsters, the very things, in fact, which she suggests as her alternative methods of assembling her protagonists.<sup>52</sup>

Certainly several authors readily used an invasion motif for what seem almost purely fictional purposes, both in ardently anti-Jacobin novels such as Pye's *Aristocrat*, in which the arrival of a party of French 'corsairs' on the coast of Scotland allows a hero to prove himself, before they vanish from the novel, and in less deeply committed works such as the anonymous *The Invasion; or, What Might Have Been* of 1798 or Hugh Murray's *Swiss Emigrants* of 1804.<sup>53</sup> Though its title, date, and subject matter - a foreign invasion of southern England taking place in an unspecified present - would seem to ensure that the reader is to encounter an anti-Jacobin purpose in *The Invasion*, the novel lacks any reference to the concerns of 1798, a year dominated by an invasion scare following the Nore and Spithead mutinies. Instead, the invasion plays the central rôle in the characterisation and the plot of the novel as we find that Sherland, the commander of the invaders, plans his campaign purely to capture Matilda, who has rejected him as her lover, and that even the British soldiery, who fight so gallantly, do so half to save the nation, and half to frustrate Sherland's villainous intentions by allowing their commander, our hero, to rescue Matilda.<sup>54</sup> *The Invasion* presents only the most extreme example of a political setting being adopted for a novel, but without being accompanied by the formerly always attendant ideological intent which had been responsible for politicising the novel in the first place. The balance between a propagandistic anti-Jacobinism and an anti-Jacobinism being used for literary purposes was definitely shifting, though, and definitely in favour of the latter. In Murray's novel, for example, there was much that could be construed as propaganda, for the novel is set against the backdrop of the French invasion of peaceful Switzerland. Yet the Revolutionaries are never criticised in conventional anti-Jacobin terms, such as we have become used to finding in previous novels set during the Revolution, and nor do they receive any specific obloquy, as, for instance, we are told in only the vaguest terms that a heroine must flee her native land for fear of 'those calamities which might be too certainly be expected from the ravages of such an enemy as this was reported to be.'<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> West, *Infidel Father*, III, 47. In the event, West has all her characters repair to London for a variety of different reasons.

<sup>53</sup> Pye, *Aristocrat*, I, 192-203.

<sup>54</sup> As one character explains during the siege that comprises much of the action of the novel, 'It is not so much Fordwich that he [Sherland] is besieging, as the place that contains Matilda', and when he gains the town Sherland does indeed immediately burst into Matilda's room announcing 'My prize is at last obtained!' The British army, despite much of the country being in enemy hands, shares Sherland's personal agenda, as Captain Strafford, Matilda's true lover, writes: 'such is the eagerness of the brave fellows under me, to serve the cause of their country in general, and to avenge my private injuries in particular, that they even court fatigue, and will march on when I would spare them'. Anon., *The Invasion; or, What Might Have Been* [London, 1798], I, 112, 165 and 213.

<sup>55</sup> Murray, *The Swiss Emigrants: A Tale* [London, 1804], p.79.

The French Revolution too, as it was portrayed in numerous novels after the turn of the century, became, according to what may be discerned of the authors' intentions, little more than a backdrop to the unfolding of the fiction's more literary concerns. To a certain extent, of course, this had been the case in those novels of the '90s that had adopted a Revolutionary setting, and it was positively the case for an ideologically ambiguous author such as Mary Robinson. Her *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796) and *Natural Daughter* (1799) used the Revolution primarily as a plot-device, the necessary emigration of all aristocrats from Paris when the Revolution came providing the premise for the wanderings of the de Sevrac family that make up the action of the former, whilst even Robespierre and Marat were roped in as fictional characters, with a predilection for British heroines, in the latter. In *The Natural Daughter*, we find, one heroine is delivered from a terrible fate by the assassination of Marat, while another is saved from Robespierre's vengeance only by a new insurrection aimed against him. Both novels provide somewhat travestied, but providential, readings of recent French history.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, it must remain something of a moot point exactly when, and in which novels, the transition occurred between those novels which invested the conventions of fiction with an anti-Jacobin purpose, and those in which the Revolution was used more as a fascinating, and therefore highly serviceable, backdrop. The vehemence of a particular production provides no clues, for there was a tendency of those novels written at the remove of a full generation to hyperbolise wildly and paint the Revolutionary age in colours that no contemporary would have hazarded. 'Yes,' says the hero of Louisa Sidney Stanhope's *Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro* of 1818, for example, raising his clasped hands to heaven, 'we will embalm in our blood the memory of the Sainted Louis ... we do swear enmity and mortal hate to the rank republic of France!' Not even the most fervent anti-Jacobin of the Revolutionary years would have dared canonise Louis XVI.<sup>57</sup> Novels of the late eighteenth century can be just as hard to place. Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne*, for instance, was unquestionably propagandistic in its design, but, like Robinson's novels, and many that were to come later, it still included Marat as a character, and one who, apparently, could even perform the rôle of wayside assassin himself when his resentment was raised against the hero of the novel.<sup>58</sup> Yet, to compare Robinson's elimination of Marat with Craik's version is illuminating. Whilst Robinson simply reports the tyrant's death in a sentence, and remarks that it rescued her protagonist from certain annihilation at the guillotine, Craik depicts the assassination, accompanying it with two explanatory touches. Firstly, Charlotte Cordet, one of Craik's central characters, shouts 'Adelaide de Narbonne' as she plunges the dagger into the despot's body, fully integrating both the character and the deed into the fiction. But secondly, Craik adds a speech delivered by the assassin to the

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<sup>56</sup> Robinson, *Hubert de Sevrac. A Romance of the Eighteenth Century* [1796; Dublin, 1797], I, 1-2, and *The Natural Daughter*, II, 209-213 and 266-68.

<sup>57</sup> Louisa Sidney Stanhope, *The Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro. A Tale* [London, 1818], II, 120.

<sup>58</sup> Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne*, III, 94-97.

Revolutionary tribunal, touching on the political philosophy of tyrannicide, and manifestly introduced for its edifying anti-Jacobinism. It was 'a duty she owed her country, and mankind in general,' we hear Charlotte pronounce, 'to rid the world of a monster, whose sanguinary doctrines were framed to involve the nation in anarchy and civil war;' adding that she had 'a right to put Marat to death, as a convict already condemned by the public opinion.'<sup>59</sup> Craik's novel, we find, has both appropriated the conventions of the novel in order to enhance the propagandistic capabilities of her fiction, and has appropriated the conventions of anti-Jacobinism, that is to say its conception of the Revolution, for the much more literary purposes of justifying the conduct of one of her central characters and uniting the political and personal themes of her novel.

But if Craik's fiction displays an overtly didactic intent lacking in Robinson's, how much more obviously absent is it from the succeeding wave of novels set in the Revolution and its aftermath? In Sarah Wood's *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron* (1800), in Anna Maria Porter's *Hungarian Brothers* (1807), in *Memoirs of Female Philosophers* (1808), even in the sombre-sounding *The Irishmen; a Military-Political Novel* (1810), the Revolution and associated events loom large in the plot, but are accompanied by no such explicit sermonising of any political hue, despite the fact that none of them was published at any great distance from the Revolution itself, and all of them actually during the ensuing and necessarily associated protracted struggle with the Napoleonic regime. In *The Hungarian Brothers*, for example, the two eponymous heroes serve in the coalition leagued against France in 1796-97, a sphere of operations which would have given Porter plenty of opportunity for animadversions on the Revolutionary enemy, had she wished to include them. But she recruits the Revolution only once, and then without any hint of deliberate propagandising, merely to emphasise the generous nature of one of the brothers as he praises the military prowess of the French despite the fact, Porter insists, that 'he was an ardent foe to their destructive system, and their thirst for universal domination.'<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the closest *The Irishmen* gets to a political sentiment, despite its promising title, is one character's pompous arraignment of the Convention of Cintra, whilst *The Post-Captain; or, the Wooden Walls Well Manned* (1808), although it depicts life aboard a British warship in the years prior to the Peace of Amiens, and although it introduces its readers to a whole mess of naval officers, makes scarcely a mention of the view of the French to be had from one of the navy's ships-of-the-line, nor of its protagonists' opinions of the war. The war only intrudes, in fact, to provide the prize money our hero acquires from his share of the spoils of three captured merchant-men, which allows him to settle down in matrimonial felicity at the novel's close.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Robinson, *Natural Daughter*, I, 213; Craik, *Adelaide de Narbonne*, IV, 280.

<sup>60</sup> Anna Maria Porter, *The Hungarian Brothers* [London, 1807], I, 181.

<sup>61</sup> Anon., *The Irishmen; a Military-Political Novel* [London, 1810], II, 240-41; and John Davis (?), *The Post-Captain; or, the Wooden Walls Well Manned; Comprehending A View of Naval Society and Manners* [London, 1808?]. In *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805) too, one might be excused for thinking that the Revolution had been included solely to provide a fortune for the hero since the author's elaborate rationale for a distant relation's sudden bequest of his wealth is based around his having only recently become a 'violent an enemy of everything connected with the revolution', because it had confiscated his property, and his



It was not only the anti-Jacobins' representations of revolution that hung over into post-crisis fiction. A residue of new philosophy is also often visible, as in the anonymous *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School* (1803), in which, from the title onwards, may be found numerous allusions to this *bête noire* of so many conservatives. Yet these allusions are all lacking in the didacticism, the contempt and ridicule, that had been central to novels such as *Modern Philosophers* or *History of Sir George Warrington*, and we are left with the impression that the author of *The Chances* recognised the approved targets at which he or she might aim, but had apparently simply neglected to pull the trigger. As a result we find Rousseau and Voltaire, Diderot and D'Alembert, and 'all the French philosophers who were now so generally spread throughout Europe' introduced into the fiction, not as a boon to society certainly, but without the hitherto essential denunciation, the reason for including their names in the first place. Indeed, the author even includes a 'free-debating society', specific references to the 'doctrine of necessity', and mentions of 'the sowers of sedition and disturbers of the world's quiet' - but all without the familiar injunctions to detest them.<sup>62</sup>

It is in one particular novel of 1805, though, that this loss of the original anti-Jacobin intent of such representations of French and British Jacobinism is clearest. In Charlotte Dacre's *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* the residue of anti-Jacobinism is unmistakable from the outset, setting the plot rolling when the father of Cazire, our heroine, is seduced away from her mother by the Countess Rosendorf, a home-wrecking coquette who uses all the cant of new philosophy to accomplish the deed. 'You are a man to whom the prejudices of the world are nothing', she goads, 'have we not each been most preposterously mismatched by the idle prevalence of a political institution? ... reason and right evidently point out to man the path of happiness: - he is a fool - no philosopher, if he pursue it not' - phrases that are repeated by Fribourg, a second new philosopher, who, further on in the novel, attempts to lure Cazire herself into a similarly dissolute relationship. In just one revealing sentence, though, part of Cazire's response to the iniquity of Fribourg, Dacre's prose reveals that the link between this kind of new philosophy and the anti-Jacobin anxiety about the threat of the Revolution which had originally spawned it, had been sundered. She *seems* to make the connection: 'You remind me,' Cazire says, 'of those sanguinary rebels who sought to hurl a peaceful monarch from his throne,' but it is the fact that she had to be *reminded*, that the connection was not immediately obvious, that demonstrates that the French Revolutionaries and such new philosophy as she had infused into her novel (which after all was being used by an aristocrat like the Countess) were no longer coupled in Dacre's mind, were no longer two faces of the same iniquity, as anti-Jacobinism had originally created them.<sup>63</sup>

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having therefore decided to leave his fortune to someone who hated, and could take it beyond the reach of, the Jacobins - namely our hero (II, 256-58).

<sup>62</sup> Anon., *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School* [London, 1803], II, 148, 146 and 123, I, 81 and 159.

<sup>63</sup> 'Rosa Matilda' [Charlotte Dacre], *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer. A Tale* [London, 1805], I, 17-18 and 129-30. It should also be noted that neither Fribourg's nor Rosendorf's new philosophy is foot-noted in Dacre's fiction, even when they use

What must also be apparent from Dacre's use of the Revolution and new philosophy, however sequestered they might have become, was that neither were morally or politically neutral conceptions. If we run Cazire's meditation on Fribourg's new philosophy on a little this become very obvious, as she envisages the 'sanguinary rebels', of whom Fribourg's sophistry had reminded her, as monsters,

whose vices and whose indolence render them obnoxious to society, and who willingly profited by the general devastation to attain a guilty eminence on the mangled bodies of their fellow creatures; blood alone could satisfy their thirsting souls; heated by dwelling on the fancied injustice they experienced, they longed to wade through the purple current, to gorge their hearts with murder, and sink to their own gloomy level those whom they could not rise to equal.<sup>64</sup>

This is strong stuff, and contains all the familiar contempt for the Revolution. It is, however, noticeably tangential to the main dynamic of the novel, no longer the fiction's primary purpose, but simply bright colouring to be added to the fiction to engross our attention, excite our solicitude, and to shape our regard for the heroine who has pronounced such sentiments, and the villain who has provoked them. In Stanhope's *Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro*, to take just one other example, the Revolution was depicted in terms which could scarcely have been more garishly horrid, terms which could not have failed to instil in the reader a hatred of insurrection in France and elsewhere. And yet when each sample of this ostentatious invective is examined in detail, it reveals itself to be there for a distinctly non-didactic purpose - to emphasise gallantry or compassion perhaps, or even the hero's love for a heroine: 'No sway but your own could in these times of peril withhold me from my country', says Eugenius to Helena, 'France is deluged in blood - she craves the succour of every loyal son, and yet I linger' - such is his devotion.<sup>65</sup>

Just as anti-Jacobinism had appropriated fictional conventions to assist in its didactic enterprise then, novelists such as Dacre and Stanhope were happy in effect to reverse the process by enlisting anti-Jacobinism to add a dimension to their productions, an authorial decision which, on the face of it, was made on literary grounds, but which none the less carried with it, even if it was as inert baggage, a lucid ideological message. It was as if authors had appropriated, say, Burke's Marie-Antoinette trope for their fiction, knowing that even the use of her name would evoke certain sentiments, but had forgotten who she was and what she had represented. And indeed, this particular example serves as something more than just a simile, for several novelists employed this very technique, endowing a character with the distinctive name 'Antoinette', subjecting her to all manner of persecutions, but making no discernible attendant political point. In Stanhope's *Treachery; or, the Grave of Antoinette* (1815), for instance, Antoinette falls victim to the wiles of another figure conventional from anti-Jacobin fiction, a two-faced French Abbé

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specifically-referential new philosophical phrases such as 'necessity' or the 'growth of perfection', as it would have been in the classically propagandistic anti-Jacobin novels of just a few years earlier (I, 126, 129 or 145).

<sup>64</sup> Dacre, *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer*, I, 130.

<sup>65</sup> Stanhope, *Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro*, I, 133-34.

named St. Pierre (perhaps meant to bring to mind Rousseau's St. Preux), a villain who, furthermore, we find to be something of a philosopher when it suits his purpose. Undoubtedly, this must have struck a resonant political chord with all but the novel's youngest readers, but equally it was a chord that was meant to augment only the literary effect of the fiction, for not once does Stanhope make her historical reference clear.<sup>66</sup> The effect to be derived from such anti-Jacobin structures was still in place in novels such as these, but the author's intent had vanished.

The gap between intent and effect is well illustrated by one of Dacre's later novels, *The Passions* of 1811. Her purpose, in so far as she had one, was expressed in the moral with which she concluded her four volumes. There are three things, we learn, which she trusts 'to have impressed upon the minds of those who have contemplated the picture we have offered'. The first suggests the anti-Jacobinism of so many novels published a decade earlier, for she talks of 'the dangers of listening to the blandishments of sophistry'. The second and third, though, if they do not quite show this anti-Jacobinism to be entirely tangential, do reveal that Dacre was not writing solely with this aim in mind and had returned to pre-Revolutionary conventions, for she warns of the perils 'of yielding to the guilty violence of the Passions, or of swerving even in *thought* from the sacred line of virtue, and our duty,' conservative principles certainly, but hardly anti-Jacobin.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, if her intentions were not anti-Jacobin, her method was, for she had evidently found the patterns developed by anti-Jacobin novelists so useful for the construction of a novel that she retained them. Her plot was straight-forward. Appollonia Zulmer has been deserted by Count Wiemar, and determines to revenge herself by corrupting his innocent wife, Julia. She achieves this with the help of what is plainly new philosophy, introducing Julia to Rousseau's works, talking of 'the delusions of prejudice' or the philosophy of reason and nature, and enlisting some distinctively Wollstonecraftian grievances against society's treatment of women so as to make Julia resentful.<sup>68</sup> That her method was anti-Jacobin meant that so too would be the effect of her fiction, for only the most perfunctory reading could fail to notice the apparently intrinsic connection between the malice of Appollonia and the arguments which she uses, and so although Dacre was clearly not deliberately writing

<sup>66</sup> Louisa Sidney Stanhope, *Treachery; or, the Grave of Antoinette* [London, 1815], IV, 94-95. Stanhope's was at least the third novel to issue from the Minerva Press bearing the name 'Antoinette' in the title. I have, however, been unable to see copies of either Anne Plumptre's *Antoinette. A Novel* [London, 1796] or Mary Pilkington's (?), *The Subterranean Cavern; or, Memoirs of Antoinette de Monflorance* [London, 1798]. Contrariwise, Henry Summersett explains in the preface to his *Leopold Warndorf* [London, 1800], also published at the Minerva, that he changed the name of one character from 'Antoinette' when re-writing his play as a novel, but he gives no reason (I, ii-iii). Since his preface also speaks of his worries about charges of plagiarism, and given the predilection for the name shown by recent authors, we might suspect that he made this alteration as a result of his anxiety about accusations of literary theft.

<sup>67</sup> 'Rosa Matilda' [Charlotte Dacre], *The Passions* [London, 1811], IV, 340.

<sup>68</sup> Dacre, *The Passions*, I, 207-10, II, 89, III, 29. The feminism with which Appollonia hopes to ensnare Julia may not be straight out of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but is in keeping with the sort of précis of Wollstonecraft's views common to numerous anti-Jacobin novelists (e.g. Walker, *Vagabond*, I, 180-81): 'How contemptible to gain the worthless applause of those who call themselves our masters,' writes Appollonia, 'that we should consent to sink ourselves to a level with idiocy - to be insignificance itself - to abstain from all cultivation of the intellect - to suppress every grain of it, to avoid as pestilence, the pursuit of literature - to have no ideas - to form no opinions - to pretend to no judgement - to oppose no wrong - to be, in short, in all things, obedient, and yield the path to them alone' (II, 63-64).



an ideological novel, she had inadvertently constructed what was in practice almost as anti-Jacobin a work as Elizabeth Hamilton, Ann Thomas, Charles Lucas, or Sophia King had ever produced.

And, perhaps more perfectly than in any other piece of fiction, the same ambivalent anti-Jacobinism, or anti-Jacobinism by default, is evident in Maria Edgeworth's 'Madame de Fleury', one of her *Tales of Fashionable Life* first published in 1809. As must be immediately apparent, this rather laboured tale was a fable invented to fulfil a very specific purpose, being, as one Edgeworth scholar has put it, 'a trifle which cannot be classified as fiction' and 'essentially a teaching on how to teach', a narrative built around a description of how a successful school was founded and run by Madame de Fleury, and in which the principles and practices of Edgeworth's own *Essays on Practical Education* are enforced.<sup>69</sup> What makes it interesting in the context of the anti-Jacobin novel is that the tale is set in Paris in the years immediately prior to, and during, the French Revolution, and although her historicity is not faultless, Edgeworth does smoothly elide her didactic design with the progress of events. Indeed, she keeps us up-to-date with historical developments by adducing the way in which they affect the children of the school, so that, although her pedagogical purpose remains centre-stage, an utter contempt for the Revolution attends it. In its early stages, for instance, the Revolution is basically figured as a direct assault on education ('I assure you, nuns, and school-mistresses, and schools, and all that sort of things, are out of fashion no - we have abolished all that'), and we are treated not to descriptions of Jacobin atrocities, but to an encomium on the educational system which has ensured that at least some of the poor children of Paris will not be deceived into the general iniquity. 'When the public disturbances began,' we are told, the children of Madame de Fleury's school

were shocked by the horrible actions they saw. Instead of being seduced by bad example, they only showed anxiety to avoid companions of their own age, who were dishonest, idle or profligate.<sup>70</sup>

And it is a point deliberately emphasised by Edgeworth as she charts the progress of one girl, denied the chance to attend the school by the fact that she was taken in by a fashionable lady who desired to teach her all sorts of useless 'accomplishments' (in complete contradiction of the Edgeworth system), and we see her become not merely a supporter of the Revolution, but the mistress of one of its leading lights, dying in despair, of course, following his execution.

Eventually, the Revolution, now personified as Citoyen Tracassier, enemy to Madame de Fleury because of his jealousy of the success of her school, conspires to force the emigration of the school's

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<sup>69</sup> O. Elizabeth McWhorter Harden, *Miss Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction* [The Hague, 1971], p.184. Harden, unlike many critics who all but ignore 'Madame de Fleury', does express her opinion on the work, but could find nothing kind to say: 'The tale lacks narrative interest, the machinery is awkward and clumsy, and the events falter throughout their progression. This is one of the worst specimens of Miss Edgeworth's composition' (p.184). The *Essays on Practical Education*, by Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, had been published in 1798 and reworked in 1801.

<sup>70</sup> Edgeworth, 'Madame de Fleury', II, 249 and 248.



benefactress, and a large portion of the tale consists of reports sent to her detailing the success of the school's pupils in avoiding the corruption into which the rest of France has been plunged and in staying loyal to the values into which Madame de Fleury has educated them, values which seem almost incidentally anti-Jacobin. 'Dear Madame de Fleury, how much, how very much we are obliged to you', one of them writes, speaking of her brother who 'is now so good a workman, that he earns a louis a week, ... is very steady to his business,' and, as a natural corollary and nothing more, 'never goes to the revolutionary meetings, though once he had a great mind to be an orator of the people'.<sup>71</sup> It is a technique that reaches its apogee when the assiduity of another well-educated boy makes him so popular with a leading figure of the Revolution that he is promised the granting of one request. Inevitably, he wishes for Madame de Fleury to be struck off the list of émigrées, and she triumphantly returns to France to find that all those whom she taught are happy and prosperous, whilst those who scorned her tuition have come to a sticky end.

Much of this, one gradually realises, is very reminiscent of the classically anti-Jacobin novels of the '90s. The very idea of the Revolution as a suitable setting for a novel, an ideal arena in which to test out one's characters, comes from at least a decade previous to Edgeworth's rendering. As does the use of specific fictional patterns - the guillotining of a leading Jacobin to leave his mistress to die in misery, say, which is familiar from Robinson's *Natural Daughter*, or the treacherous abbé-turned-citoyen, a villain able to carry out his persecutions through his membership of the Committee of Public Safety, which we might remember having seen in *The Banished Man*. Even the vocabulary and imagery of the Revolution is taken from earlier novels, Edgeworth talking of 'men of brutal manners, ferocious countenances, and more ferocious minds' herding people to their death at the guillotine.<sup>72</sup> And as such, a fiction like 'Madame de Fleury' perfectly demonstrates how the conventions of the anti-Jacobin novel had been appropriated for new purposes, just as the anti-Jacobins themselves had appropriated numerous already-existing fictional conventions to suit their ends. The Revolution, in Edgeworth's narrative, served other purposes than anti-Jacobinism. But ultimately, because such a fiction had absorbed so many of the conventions of the anti-Jacobins' treatment of the Revolution and Jacobinism, it retained an ideological commitment intrinsically within its structures. As a result, anti-Jacobin fiction became a genre that extended well into the nineteenth century, rather curiously outliving by some distance the Revolution crisis which had begot it. Such novels may have been only incidentally and unintentionally anti-Jacobin,

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<sup>71</sup> Edgeworth, 'Madame de Fleury', II, 284-85. There are numerous other incidents in the novel in which the virtues of Madame de Fleury's educational system are expounded, and many of them continue to draft in the Revolution to provide the circumstances in which the point can best be proved. The system has taught one girl self-control, for instance, by reminding her that Madame de Fleury healed the arm with which she had intended to strike a fellow pupil, and we are reminded of the success of the technique later in the novel when the same girl prevents the de Fleury château from being attacked by the mob by reminding its leader that he had been nursed back to health by an associate of Madame de Fleury and, out of gratitude to her, should not commit the crime. Naturally, he restrains the mob (II, 291-94).

<sup>72</sup> Edgeworth, 'Madame de Fleury', II, 262-64.

but they nevertheless undeniably enforced a rigid anti-Jacobin line. And that this anti-Jacobinism had become inherent in the structure of numerous novels, and perhaps even in the novel form itself, was perhaps the greatest, and most lasting, achievement of those authors who had striven to requisition the form for their purposes back in the era of the Revolution crisis at its height.

## 9: The Creation of Orthodoxy: Constructing the Anti-Jacobin Novel

The Stagyrte, who rules from Nature drew,  
Opinions gave, but gave his reasons too.  
Our great Dictators, take a shorter way, -  
Who shall dispute what the Reviewers say?  
Their word's sufficient; and to ask a reason,  
In such a STATE as theirs, is downright TREASON.

- An anonymous poet, quoted by William Pontey, *The Rotten Reviewers; or Dressing for the Morbid Branches of the Anti-Jacobin and Critical Reviews* (1807?)

From the early 1790s onwards conservative novels consistently outnumbered the radical fictions that had provoked them into being, and by the turn of the century succeeded in entirely vanquishing *Things As They Are* and *Man As He Should Be* from the book-sellers' lists and the circulating libraries, flooding the presses in numbers large enough to constitute a new genre all of their own. To be able to assess this literary phenomenon it has been necessary to consider at the outset exactly what defined the anti-Jacobin novel. Having done this, the more complicated, and more important, question is, why did the anti-Jacobin novel achieve and sustain such prevalence? Why, in other words, were they written? It is with this crucial question that literature assumes its real historical significance.

Implicit in my analysis of the anti-Jacobin novel has been the assumption that its popularity and eventual dominance is certainly a symptom, and perhaps also in a limited way, a cause, of the almost hegemonic political conservatism that characterised Britain in the strangely calm seas that lie between the Treason Trials and the Spa Field riots, an age when, as E. P. Thompson has so influentially argued, what radicalism remained was driven underground. We should be wary, though, of allowing such a view, however attractive, to answer the 'why' of anti-Jacobin fiction - *why* did the genre develop, *why* did authors continue to extend the genre, and *why* did it achieve such dominance.<sup>1</sup> When dealing with novels, as with any form of cultural production, a question surrounding the rôle of the artist will always be posed, denying the possibility of an easy attribution of cause to effect. Is it in any way historically significant, for instance, that an individual author, no matter how meritorious intellectually or literarily, responds in a particular way to his or her historical context? Each individual author will be affected by all sorts of biographical conditions which interfere with the relationship between historical circumstance and literary

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<sup>1</sup> Historians 'can respond only to queries about what and how, never about why', David Hackett Fischer has cautioned, and this is a warning that applies especially to cultural history with its tempting tendency to assume that some smooth causal link exists between certain given historical circumstances and what authors write. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Towards a Logic of Historical Thought* [New York, 1970] as summarised in Barton R. Friedman, *Fabricating History. English Writers on the French Revolution* [Princeton, N.J., 1988], p.4.

production, their utter subjectivity invalidating as unrepresentative any reaction in their work to what must remain their own consciousness of an historical period. Even a text overtly positioned in an historical frame of reference, Coleridge's 'France: An Ode' (his 1798 recantation of support for the Revolution) for example, cannot be seen as an 'effect' of historical events, as his own *Biographia Literaria* affirmed:

The 'reality' that poems 'imitate' is not the objective world as such, but... the consciousness of the poet himself in his encounters with the objective world... the poet's only genuine subject matter is himself, and the only ideas he presents will be ideas about the activity of consciousness in the world around it.<sup>2</sup>

The author presents a reflection of his or her historical context but altered, often unrecognizably, in the mirror of his or her own consciousness. For an historian to take any author, an anti-Jacobin novelist say, as representative of a literary response would be as glaring a synecdochic fallacy as for the literary critic to take a fictional character as being representative of a real, historical group, taking Squire Falkland from *Caleb Williams*, say, to stand for all late-eighteenth century aristocrats, or regarding George Walker's Citizen Ego as a typical member of the London Corresponding Society.

It might appear that there is something to be said for the significance of several, even many, authors all writing similar sorts of things in response to their historical circumstances as they conceived them. That Burns, Wordsworth and Coleridge all recanted their early support for the French Revolution in the years 1795-1800 says something that is more significant than the writings of any individual alone can ever be, especially an individual such as Blake, to take an extreme example, whom we might politely call 'eccentric'. By the same token, the publication of some forty or so anti-Jacobin novels between 1795 and 1805, years that have been convincingly identified as a period of widespread counter-revolutionary sentiment, is surely even more historically significant. Indeed, the basis of my research has been that the anti-Jacobin novels of the '90s and beyond represented the emerging hegemony of conservatism in Britain and that they clearly display what their authors regarded as the composition of the Jacobinism against which they strove, as well as what they considered to be its most vulnerable points. This, of course, has been why, throughout the preceding chapters, I have insisted on regarding anti-Jacobin novels as if they constituted a single text, as if they came from the pen of just one aggregate author.

And yet just as the Burns-Wordsworth-Coleridge experience only really tells us of the response to the Revolution of young romantic poets, so the anti-Jacobin novels appear to tell us only about the reaction of a few individuals who it cannot be guaranteed accurately represented the society from which they came. It must remain a rather glib and unsatisfactory method of understanding anti-Jacobin fiction to surmise simply that conservatism of the country as a whole in some nebulous way caused authors to write conservative novels which perfectly reflected the parameters, methods and values of that conservatism. But this is precisely the point where the genre in which this anti-Jacobinism was carried, the popular novel, becomes so useful to historians. Much more than the poetry of Coleridge or Blake, for example,

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<sup>2</sup> C. M. Wallace, *The Design of Biographia Literaria* [London, 1983], p.113.



the popular fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was written for its audience. It is not to denigrate the novels with which I have been dealing (although plenty of their critics, both modern and contemporary, have been happy to do that) to point out that, as a whole, they were a commodity first, and an artform second. In a fiercely competitive market there was no alternative. It is the willingness of these novelists to comply with what was expected of them that allows the historian to envisage the audience of novels, alongside their writers, as at least the co-authors of their composition. What we can detect in the fictional production of the 1790s and 1800s is a cyclical relationship between production and reception, a continuum in which authors refined their product according to what their readership demanded. It is the way in which this process operated which I will be exploring in this chapter.

This is not to say, however, that individual authors simply wrote what they thought their readers wanted. Undoubtedly this was, to an extent, the case, but as we shall see in the sections that follow, there was a complex and well-established nexus of factors which mediated the demands of audience to authors, holding out the prospects of rewards if authors complied with the expectations of the society for which they were writing, and threatening any transgression with a variety of penalties: obscurity, poverty, opprobrium, or worse. As a result, the novelists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries overwhelmingly produced works which fell within what Hans Robert Jauss has called the 'horizon of expectations', both in artistic and ideological terms, responding in their continuing productivity to that which had been most successful, commercially and critically and thus ideologically too, in the recent past.<sup>3</sup> It is this quality that allows the historian to locate the reason for the production of so many anti-Jacobin novels - the *why* of conservative fiction - not in the internal and necessarily subjective volition of individual authors, but actually in the values and desires of the community for which those authors wrote.

Second, by demonstrating how fiction was purged of its radical content, and how it was forced into an conservative mould, we will be better able to speculate about why the ascendancy of the anti-Jacobin novel was born and sustained.

### *1 The nexus anatomised*

Because theirs was a cause so out of step with the times, and so dangerous as a result, there has been an understandable tendency to view the radicals of the 1790s, in whatever sphere they were operating, as more committed, more dedicated, than those who came to oppose them. Clearly, though, many anti-Jacobins were equally motivated, equally passionate, and equally willing to undertake their crusade

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<sup>3</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti [Brighton, 1982], passim. Jauss' work, partially embodied in his suggestion that the 'History of literature is a process of aesthetic reception and production that takes place in the realization of literary texts on the part of the receptive reader, the reflective critic, and the author in his continuing productivity' (21), provides the foundation for much of this chapter.

against Jacobinism for no other reason than because they thought it imperative for the survival of all that they held, either spiritually or temporally, sacred. This crusading fervour often existed irrespective of any external factors encouraging them to write as they did. Yet the facts that novelists often came to anti-Jacobinism in the midst of their careers, that an attempt at an anti-Jacobin production was sometimes only a once-off foray into political fiction before a return to more conventional material, and that their anti-Jacobin works sometimes even represented a repudiation of previously held sentiments, all suggest that authorial volition was being filtered, or even contaminated, by something alien to the purest well-springs of literary creation. In this section, I shall be looking at the nature of these factors affecting literary production. In the next, I shall be examining to what extent an anti-Jacobinism was, in fact, successfully imposed.

Firstly, though, it is important that we recognise fiction as a medium controlled by circumspection from within, as it were, rather than censorship from without, and very successfully too, from the conservative point of view. In his study of British drama during the French Revolution, Theodore Grieder has asserted that the plays performed on the stages of London and Edinburgh in the 1790s were little short of unanimous in their retailing of a blatant and uncompromising conservatism. This is an unsurprising finding, of course, since throughout the years of Revolution Crisis, and for a long while beyond indeed, every work proposed for performance passed before the official Inspector of Plays, John Larpent, a man, as Grieder demonstrates, as proficient as he was willing in excising even the slightest sign of sedition or immorality.<sup>4</sup> That Government, even in the face of what many considered its greatest danger for at least a century, did not think fit to equip other branches of literature with a similar official censor was a cause of no little regret to many who feared for the nation. 'Amicus', perhaps a little behind the times with his letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1808, lamented that 'Of all the privileges that Englishmen possess, there seems no one of which they are more jealous than what is termed the Liberty of the Press'. If they submit to a Licensor of the Stage, he complains, why should they regard any attempt to put similar controls on other forms of literature as such a serious infringement of their freedom? Such foolish pride was putting the kingdom in jeopardy, since, he went on, how trifling must be

the extent of the mischief which may be produced by the licentiousness of the Stage ... in comparison with what may be produced by the licentiousness of the Press! How few persons are likely to be contaminated by the performance of an immoral play, compared with those who may be rendered vicious by the publication of an immoral book, which can be circulated throughout the kingdom, and may enter every house, from the mansion to the cottage.

Any doubt over which particular branch of literature Amicus was referring to, and it is unlikely that anyone acquainted for any length of time with the views of Sylvanus Urban, editor of the *Gentleman's*, and his correspondents would have been in doubt, is soon removed. 'I more particularly refer to the

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<sup>4</sup> Theodore Godfrey Grieder, Jr., 'The French Revolution in the British Drama: A Study in British Popular Literature of the Decade of Revolution' [Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1957], *passim*, especially pp.6-7.

keepers of circulating libraries', Amicus explains, institutions which 'have increased for some years in an extraordinary degree, and may, without any undue severity, be said to encourage the production of such works as disgrace the English press.'<sup>5</sup>

That 'Amicus' in 1808, like Hannah More a year later, persisted in thinking the circulating library to be a 'mart of mischief', an opinion unchanged from Sheridan's depiction of it as the 'ever-green tree, of diabolical knowledge' a generation earlier, is something of a misrepresentation, and may be also a trifle disingenuous.<sup>6</sup> Just as More used her concern to justify her novel, *Coelebs*, so correspondents of the *Gentleman's Magazine* saw in their admonitions and warnings a method of superintending the production and reception of literature. When one reviewer for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, who ten years previously had been so affronted by *Santa Maria; or, The Mysterious Pregnancy* (1798) that he had demanded, if not quite a censor of novels, then an *index* of condemned works, a 'review of all the Novels of the year in a monthly publication, pointing out such as were of an improper tendency with candour, and recommending those of merit', he was actually contributing to just such a thing.<sup>7</sup> His comments, like those of 'Amicus', were designed to show readers of novels what they ought to be seeking for, or avoiding, and thus to show authors what they ought, as they valued their reputation and success, to be writing. Neither the Licensor of Novels, nor the Moral Index of Proscribed Books ever came into being, but it was the eternal vigilance of just such self-appointed guardians of the public good who built up a network of informal censorship which was every bit as effective as the official work of the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

As Grieder points out with regard to plays, it was the threat of censorship, as much as its reality, that controlled what material made it to the stage. With no official censor, the content of the novels that reached the circulating libraries could be determined only by the trepidation of the producers. But the Arguses of the *Gentleman's Magazine* were not the sole supervisors of literary production. For a novel even to gain the dubious distinction of a periodical review required a publisher willing to take on the manuscript, which presupposed, though not always rightly, a public willing to buy or borrow the book. The novel was a commodity like any other, and few publishers or book-sellers were prepared to flout the laws of the free-market in its favour. Fear of not finding a publisher and fear of not finding a market were perhaps the greatest deterrents for would-be novelists. And looking beyond that hurdle, fear of the contempt or, perhaps worse, the neglect, of reviewers, was compounded by fear of a specific attack by one of the many autonomous literary vigilantes who kept watch for objects on whom to vent their patriotic spleen.

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<sup>5</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 78 (September 1808), 782-83.

<sup>6</sup> H. More to William Pepys, 13 December, 1809, in W. Roberts, *Memoirs of Mrs Hannah More* [London, 1834], III, 313; R. B. Sheridan, *The Rivals* (1775) in *Sheridan's Plays*, ed. Cecil Price [Oxford, 1975], p.21.

<sup>7</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 68 (September 1798), 786-87.

Most obviously, though, the process of publication itself tended to shape what material actually left the presses. Although a very few novels were published privately, even those produced ostensibly with the backing of an eminent collection of subscribers required a publisher. And notwithstanding the animadversions of critics of the Minerva Press, the circulating libraries, and the whole novel genre, who insisted for their own denigrating purposes that any trash would be accepted and disseminated so long as it conformed with the basics of the novel's formula, authors did not always find it easy to find a publisher for their work. Even Charlotte Smith, at the height of her powers, had recourse to some arithmetical rhetoric, demonstrating the potential profit, to persuade Messrs. Cadell and Davies to take on the second volume of her poems.<sup>8</sup> That publishers could and did refuse to take on proffered novels is vividly depicted by the melancholy, and doubtless at least semi-autobiographical, tales which frequently find a place in the novels of the 1790s and 1800s - tales of (temporarily) penurious heroes and heroines hunting around Paternoster Row in the vain search for publishers willing to take on their manuscripts.<sup>9</sup> Just how vital Smith thought her publishers is articulated, in one of her notorious self-pitying passages, by one of her heroes, the would-be author Marchmont:

He knew how much the success of the book depends upon the manner in which it is ushered to the public; and that the mere name of the publisher secures to some all that sort of recommendation which influences those who are to be told how to like or dislike; and in books, as in every thing else, that is at least half the world.<sup>10</sup>

In such a climate, it would have been foolish in the extreme for any budding novelist not to have considered his or her potential publisher while writing. And whilst Marchmont and other such novel-writing heroes and heroines wondered what they had done wrong, what they needed to *remove* from their manuscripts to make them acceptable to publishers, they would have been wise to ponder what they might have to *add* in order to guarantee quick and profitable publication. Indirectly, publishers encouraged certain elements in fiction, not censoring, but shaping fiction none-the-less. That which publishers deemed profitable, novelists soon incorporated into their work, perhaps most obviously, at the Minerva. Satirists of the novel, still maintaining the tradition of opposition to the whole genre, were fond of caricaturing 'pious LANE, who knows his readers well,' recognizing that his novels 'Can suit all palates

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<sup>8</sup> BL Add.MSS. 42,577 f.169, Charlotte Smith to Messrs. Cadell and Davies, 16 November, 1796. Smith was offering to sell the copyright of a second volume of her poems, the composition of which she discusses. Although she calculates the publisher's profit from an edition of 2000 to be £240 (with 200 copies set aside for her own remuneration), it seems (from Florence Hilbish, *Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist (1749-1806)* [Philadelphia, 1941], pp.129n.102 and 581) that the new poems were published privately by subscription in 1797 under the title *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems*.

<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Smith, as we shall see, continually returns to the theme of the iniquities of the publishing trade. Her protagonists have difficulty finding publishers in *The Wanderings of Warwick* [London, 1794], ch.7, and *Marchmont* [London, 1796], IV, ch.11, in particular. Mary Robinson (*The Natural Daughter* [London, 1799], II, ch.31) and Francis Lathom (*Men and Manners* [London, 1799], IV, ch.26), although the latter speaks mainly of plays, depict similar scenes. Robert Bisset, defender of the *status quo* in so many of its facets, predictably took an opposite opinion however. One of his characters, just entered upon a literary career, 'finds that book-sellers are by no means as sordid as inferior authors represent; but that, like other merchants, they pay handsomely for commodities which produce suitable returns, tho' it does not fall in with their plan to give high prices for drugs' (*Douglas; or, the Highlander* [London, 1800], IV, 372).

<sup>10</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont*, IV, 330-31.



with their diffrent food'. And no-one doubted that authors, whether hungry for profit or for the other dubious rewards that publication at Lane's famous Leadenhall Street presses might offer, took their lead from him:

Behold, with reams of nonsense newly born,  
Th'industrious train who scribble night and morn;  
Five pounds per volume! their enormous bribe:-  
Enough, methinks, to tempt a hungry scribe.<sup>11</sup>

Mary Meeke, successful author of some 34 novels (including six in 1804 alone), many published at the Minerva, made no attempt to conceal this. Any author desirous of success, she advised in the introductory chapter to her *Midnight Weddings* (1802), would do well to 'consult the taste of her publisher', who, 'as being a more competent judge than herself of the prevalent taste,' *she [sic]* ought to heed. 'Indeed,' Meeke continued,

to secure their approbation is rather the general aim; for should you fail of meeting with a purchaser, that labour you hope will immortalize you is absolutely lost; a most mortifying circumstance in every sense of the word; and the gentlemen and ladies who sit in judgement upon the fine spun webs from the prolific brains of female authors, are very competent to decide upon the taste of the public.<sup>12</sup>

The publisher was the gatekeeper of literary success, and consequently, if fiction was to pass into the corporeal world of the book-sellers and circulating libraries, authorial volition had to accept that it would be circumscribed by their judgement. This judgement was almost always securely based on the laws of the market, which, as effectively as any parliamentary statute, curtailed the freedom of expression of novelists.

But even once published, there were other elements of this nexus exerting just as formidable a control over fiction, and which any aspiring author had to treat with equal respect. Chief amongst them, were the Reviews, a branch of literature's productive process that has only recently begun to receive the notice it deserves.<sup>13</sup> Not even Lane could manage the market for novels without the assistance of the reviewers. The *Monthly*, the *Critical*, the *Analytical Reviews* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *British Critic*, *Anti-Jacobin* and *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, their shorter-lived competitors, and, latterly,

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<sup>11</sup> George Daniel, *The Modern Dunciad, A Satire; with Notes, Biographical and Critical* [1814?, 4th edn., corrected and enlarged, London, 1816], p.93.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Meeke, *Midnight Weddings. A Novel* [London, 1802], I, 4.

<sup>13</sup> The two most thoughtful analysts of late eighteenth-century literary culture in Britain have both emphasised, without necessarily deciphering, the influence of the Reviews over literary production. James Raven, in his *Judging New Wealth. Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* [Oxford, 1992], has commented that 'Adopting the guise of spokesmen for the public,' the reviewer 'exerted increasing pressure upon writers to conform to critical ideas of content and presentation. The reviewer became the leading arbiter in colourful disputes over the worth of Grub Street fiction and its influence upon young, impressionable minds' (p.67). And Jon P. Klancher, in his *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1812* [Madison, Wis., 1987], has likewise opined that the periodicals were a crucial interface between producers and consumers, themselves glorying in their self-defined rôle as the unifiers of the realms of writing and reading (pp.19-26.) However, for an actual investigation of the operation of the Reviews, the best accounts remain Derek Roper's *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh' 1788-1802* [London, 1978], Joanne Shattock's *Politics and Reviewers: The 'Edinburgh' and the 'Quarterly' in the Early Victorian Age* [London, 1989] and, for a slightly earlier age, Frank Donoghue's *The Fame Machine. Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers* [Stanford, Calif., 1996].

the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews*, were the only means, save costly advertisements, of attracting potential readers' attention to particular productions amongst the mass of novels issuing from the presses. The endorsement of a well-regarded publisher, as we have seen, counted for something, the reputation of an author, it is true, was a marketable commodity, even the words 'from the German' in the title of a novel could allegedly help sales, but all this was nothing compared with the influence of the reviewers. Certainly, the respect with which authors treated them testifies as much. The anonymous author of *Flights of Inflation* regarded 'the whole tribe of Reviewers' not just as 'great and tremendous Law-givers', but as 'absolute monarchs over literary merit', and his obeisance took the form of a preface dedicated to their praise.<sup>14</sup> Exhibiting the same deference differently, it was only the paranoid exasperation of William Pontey, whose book, *The Forest Pruner* (1805?), had been savaged by the critics, that gave him the rash courage to substitute rebuke for obsequiousness, knowing full well that it was within their unlimited power to answer him with more, and more detailed, asseverations of his folly and nefariousness (as indeed they did). 'Some idea may easily be formed of the state of *dependence* to which, it is intended, authors shall be reduced,' he wrote, advising hapless authors not to mourn their degradation, but 'ere you hope for fame and emolument from your labours, present yourselves, with due humility, before the *self-created, self-appointed WE!*'<sup>15</sup>

Charles Lloyd was another who refused to capitulate to the power of the reviewers, but he was happy to plead with them whereas Pontey had felt it beneath his dignity. His *Blank Verse* (with Charles Lamb, 1798) had been lambasted by the *Anti-Jacobin Review* and, according to Burton R. Pollin, he had produced what he considered to be the anti-Jacobin *Edmund Oliver* (1798) in response.<sup>16</sup> When Robert Bisset's review continued to malign his name, persisting with the charge that he possessed levelling tendencies, Lloyd felt compelled to publish the 38-page *Letter to the Anti-Jacobin Reviewers* (1799) in an attempt to clear his name, and appease the critics.<sup>17</sup> The attempt succeeded, and even after all this, indeed perhaps because of it, Lloyd remained convinced that the Reviews held the key to literary success, and in 1800 was demanding that friends in London enquire of the *British Critic* and the *Monthly Review* 'why they have not noticed Edmund Oliver.' Were they to do so, he explained, the copies that his Bristol printer still had in hand would be disposed of with ease.<sup>18</sup> If this was not quite *respect* for the reviewers, it was certainly a scrupulous deference.

<sup>14</sup> Anon., *Flights of Inflation; or, the Sallies, Stories, and Adventures of a Wild-Goose Philosopher* [London, 1791], I, v.

<sup>15</sup> William Pontey, *The Rotten Reviewers; or, a Dressing for the Morbid Branches of the Anti-Jacobin and Critical Reviews: Being an Exposition of the Extreme Modesty, Spotless Purity, Mature Judgement, and Strict Impartiality of Certain Writers in these Reviews...* [Huddersfield, n.d., but 1807?], pp.12-13.

<sup>16</sup> Burton R. Pollin, 'Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd as Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins', *Studies in Romanticism*, 11 (1973), 639.

<sup>17</sup> The review of *Edmund Oliver*, *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 1 (August 1798), 176-80, is attributed to Robert Bisset in Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins, 1798-1800. The Early Contributors to the 'Anti-Jacobin Review'* [Basingstoke, 1988], p.166.

<sup>18</sup> BL Ashley MSS. collection, As.B.1005, Charles Lloyd to Thomas Manning, June 2, 1800.

Derek Roper, in his study of *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, records that Cowper thought the *Monthly* could ruin his reputation even amongst the inhabitants of Olney, that Wordsworth thought reviews determined the sale of a book, and that Southey thought a favourable notice in the *Critical* would make him 'half an edition the richer man'.<sup>19</sup> If such self-willed men as these had such hopes and fears of the reviewers, with what sycophancy must the majority of novelists, simply wanting to carve out a modest but profitable niche for themselves, have thought it proper to behave? Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, however, although she can quote similar anecdotal evidence of supposed critical influence, not least amongst which is the reviewers' own boasts of their influence, makes the important point that consistently harsh reviews of Minerva novels did not seem to harm their sales - perhaps in accord with Byron's principle that a scathing review could only enhance a book's popularity - and she concludes 'that the question of the reviewers' influence is impossible to answer with any degree of exactitude'.<sup>20</sup> One reviewer even broke out of the code of self-importance implicit in their trade to lament that all his or her words were in vain if a novel had an eminent subscription list to demonstrate just how fashionable a production it was.<sup>21</sup>

Yet such is the secondary evidence of a universal trepidation amongst novelists with regard to reviewers, and such is their apparent sycophancy, that we are surely left in no doubt that fear of the reviewers exerted a very pervasive influence on what writers wrote and what publishers published. Perhaps Charlotte Palmer's decision not to attempt fiction again after *It is, and It is Not. A Novel* (1792) cannot be precisely attributed to the *Critical's* judgement that 'No, my dear, - "It is *not* a novel:" but be a good girl; do so no more; and we will say nothing about it this time',<sup>22</sup> and perhaps the reviewers did revel in their reputation for severity without being nearly so strict as they believed themselves to be,<sup>23</sup> but even the best-established novelists evidently feared the reviewer's censure. Charlotte Smith privately professed that had she written a novel which she thought might be interpreted as even minutely immoral, 'I should

<sup>19</sup> Roper, *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, p.26.

<sup>20</sup> Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, 'Jacobinism and the Reviewers. The English Literary Periodicals as Organs of Anti-Jacobin Propaganda. 1792-1832' [Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1974], pp.75-79. It would be difficult to ascertain whether the authors' fear of the reviewers was well grounded or not, at least in any single case. Those novels which attained the greatest success and were praised by the Reviews - the works of Burney and Radcliffe for instance - might well have achieved both critical and popular approval through their merits alone, whilst those novels which were censured by the reviewers and fell into immediate obscurity could hardly be singled out from the mass of works which, however they had been treated by the critics, suffered the same fate.

<sup>21</sup> *Monthly Review*, n.s., 7 (February 1792), 230.

<sup>22</sup> *Critical Review* n.s., 4 (April 1792), 472.

<sup>23</sup> Reviewers were fond of commending or 'passing' a novel by expatiating on the defects so common in its genre. Charlotte Lennox's *Euphemia* (1790), for instance, is better than most novels 'though indeed there is no prodigality of commendation in this sentence, as most of them have excited our displeasure'; or *The Dupe* (1793) is 'harmless', 'but if the tendency of many modern novels be considered, even this humble merit is not to be despised' [*Monthly Review*, n.s., 3 (September 1790), 89; *British Critic*, 3 (June 1794), 695]. In this way the critics gave the impression of stern and merciless appraisal without actually ever condemning more than one or two novels per issue (although they actually *praised* equally few). Naturally, aspirant novelists subscribed to this myth of the reviewers' severity and niceness of discrimination, providing the foundation for their trepidation.

not sleep for very horror of the next Reviews, and should tremble at every book I saw with a blue cover.<sup>24</sup>

But most prevalent of all the testimonies to the novelists' dread of the reviewers are the almost mandatory pre-emptive pleas that fill prefaces to novels, supplicating for clemency and presenting every conceivable excuse for the presumption of attempting a novel. Fairly typical is Ann Thomas' eulogy of the critics, all obsequiousness, and clearly exhibiting an anxiety compelling her to mould her fiction to the designs of the reviewers: 'To your Opinions I have always paid the utmost Deference and Respect,' she says, before, somewhat disingenuously, congratulating the critics on their wonted generosity, 'especially when no injury has been offered to the sacred Cause of Virtue.'<sup>25</sup>

It is in this last phrase that Thomas indicates a realization that beside the traditional rôle of the reviewer as adjudicator of literary merit there ran a parallel, if not an entirely superseding, critical agenda. Indeed, few authors believed that their work would be judged on its literary merits irrespective of what the reviewers themselves might claim. What criticism's real agenda was had long been a matter of conjecture among authors. Isaac D'Israeli, in his *Vaurien* (1797), depicted a spiteful cabal of London critics whose chief pleasure was to ridicule the privately published effusions of any hopeful country poet and whose chief motivation, perhaps, was simply to guard their own elevated station.<sup>26</sup> The uninhibited Pontey, concurring that there was some sinister conspiracy motivating the reviewers, accused them of being in the pay of particular booksellers, their only critical criterion being the interest of their paymasters:

The fiat goes forth, and the work is, in the polite language of these dispensers of reputation, 'damned,' 'cut up,' or 'cut down.' Every part of it is ransacked, to find real or supposed blemishes; and when none appear, that can be hashed up into such a dish as may be palatable to the public, then these second-sighted gentry industriously apply themselves to seek for meanings and tendencies, in the author's work, which [he] himself never thought of...<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Charlotte Smith to Sarah Farr Rose, 4 July, 1804. Quoted in Alan Dugald McKillop, 'Charlotte Smith's Letters', *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 15 (May 1952), 255.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron* [Plymouth, 1795?], I, iv. More lyrical, and even less assuming, is the 'Introductory Address' to the anonymous *The Misanthrope; or, the Guarded Secret* [London, 1807], which set its sights at nothing higher than being granted a review at all, hoping to avoid reproach rather than receive applause:

If no merit impure they can glean from my page  
To add to the many that sully this age,  
Where authors insidious endeavour to sow  
Their tares in the wheat like our primitive foe;  
Then obscure in the rear of the novelist cluster  
Should you deign to review me, O let me pass muster.

[Quoted and commented upon in the *British Critic*, 30 (December, 1807), 677]

<sup>26</sup> Isaac D'Israeli, *Vaurien; or, Sketches of the Times* [London, 1797], I, ch.1. When Charles, D'Israeli's hero, is forced to turn reviewer, he knows well enough that he must supply each periodical with material exactly in accordance with its well-known prejudices. However, none of these literary sentinels were alert enough to notice that an orthodox article on the Trinity meant for the *British Critic* had been accidentally sent to the *Critical*, whose article on the necessary abolition of episcopacy had reached the *British Critic* (II, 299).

<sup>27</sup> Pontey, *Rotten Reviewers*, p.4.



Charlotte Smith's Warwick was to discover the same prejudiced and mercenary conspiracy when he was forced to turn reviewer. Whilst he refrained, as much as possible, from dashing the hopes of young authors and removing from indigent women their last means of subsistence (another of Smith's passing autobiographical laments), Mr MacGowan, a more typical reviewer, was inexorable in his severity, unless, that is, 'the writer he reviewed was connected with some bookseller whose interest he had at heart, or was known to be of the party he espoused.'<sup>28</sup> This charge, that the reviews were little more than book-sellers' advertisements, a view supported by the fact that the major reviews were at least partly owned by various publishing houses, has been convincingly repudiated at some length by Derek Roper.<sup>29</sup> Instead, what Roper identifies as the real 'bias' in the Reviews, is a concern for moral propriety, a concern that had become the chief criterion of criticism long before the 1790s.

Ann Thomas, whose attempt to extenuate her effrontery for writing a novel had drawn attention to her novel's moral probity, had realized as much. Indeed, it had long been clear that moral rectitude could supersede literary merit as the chief criterion of criticism. Typically, in 1787, a review of Susannah Haswell's *Victoria. A Novel* had complimented the author for her attempt to inculcate filial piety and had shown no discomposure about any possible dereliction of duty in determining that 'In such a case Criticism soothes his brow, and takes off his spectacles, willing to see no fault. She who would support the cause of piety cannot err.'<sup>30</sup> For most critics, there was no split agenda, a moral appraisal being simply part of literary criticism. Even if anyone had questioned the non-literary agenda (which of course they could not do without incurring the wrath of the Reviews), the reason why such criteria were necessary lay within the genre of the novel itself. The supposed reader of novels, young, female and very impressionable, a stereotype which had been painstakingly established over the last half century, provided the Reviews with their warrant for moral criticism. In the popular imagination, the novel not only found most of its readers amongst women, whose character was 'by nature, weak and exposed to temptation',<sup>31</sup> but its readers, of both sexes, were, lacking in education, and therefore 'of a more ductile cast whose feelings are more easily interested, and with whom every impression is deeper, because more new.' In fact, 'so easily imposed upon' were they, that the *Quarterly* felt it incumbent upon itself to make its famous

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<sup>28</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Wanderings of Warwick*, p.276. That these were fairly constant criticisms, extending well into the nineteenth century, quickly becomes apparent. Compare, for instance, the sagacious Mr. Parkinson, in Francis Lathom's *Men and Manners*, who doubted whether 'those whose thought I buy, are either competent to decide the merits of the book they do review, or not actuated in their decision by prejudice' (III, 70), or Thomas Love Peacock's *Headlong Hall* [1815; rpt. Oxford, 1987, eds. Michael Baron and Michael Slater], in which reviewers are continually maligned as serving 'the interested ends of individuals, and the miserable purposes of party' (p.22).

<sup>29</sup> Roper, *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, pp.27-28 and 30-36. Although Ralph Griffiths had given up his publishing interests once the *Monthly* was established, George Robinson partly owned the *Critical*, Joseph Johnson owned the *Analytical*, Francis and Charles Rivington owned a third of the *British Critic* between them, and John Murray owned a share in the *English Review* (absorbed into the *Analytical* in 1796). The *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* were owned by Archibald Constable and John Murray.

<sup>30</sup> *Critical Review*, 63 (January 1787), 76-77.

<sup>31</sup> *British Critic*, 13 (April 1799), 438.

demand that the contents of the circulating libraries 'should be subject to the inspection of a *strict literary police*, and the standard of morality and sentiment kept as pure as the nature of things will admit.'<sup>32</sup>

The *Quarterly's* appeal was, at last, an open admission of at least this particular reviewer's determination to be the guardian of moral as well as literary probity, but it represented merely an articulation of a critical agenda that had long existed, an agenda of which any aspiring novelists who had ever perused the monthly catalogues of new novels that closed the Reviews were well aware. The reviewers had always been a literary police force, but it had taken the Revolution crisis to concentrate the attention of the critics. Returning to their posited novel-reader, and the critic's task to protect them, the *Edinburgh* in 1806 had reminded itself that extreme vigilance was the price of freedom: 'There can be no time, in which the purity of the female character can fail to be of the first importance to every community;' Jeffrey said, 'but it appears to us, that it requires at this moment to be more carefully watched over than at any other'.<sup>33</sup>

More importantly, during the 1790s, the mission of the reviewers' policing rôle altered. The very name of the *Anti-Jacobin* is, of course, indicative of this new emphasis, although Marilyn Butler perhaps overestimates the role this single, relatively small-scale, and rather dilatory organ of the counter-revolution played in defining the position of the literary establishment regarding dangerous fiction.<sup>34</sup> The *British Critic* had an equally well-known and specific remit to counter Jacobinism in all its forms, and, as testament to the popularity of this type of agenda, soon after its foundation could boast a circulation as large as the *Critical*.<sup>35</sup> So inextricably a part of what was still ostensibly literary criticism had this undeniably more political slant become, and so much a part of all the literary Reviews, not just those set up for a specifically anti-Jacobin purpose, that those who drew up the prospectus for a planned new periodical of 1799 felt obliged to garner support by promising that,

Though no arrogance will be indulged in this publication, whatever disturbs the public harmony, insults legal authority, outrages the best regards of the heart, invalidates the radical obligations of morality, attacks the vital springs of established functions of piety, or in any respect clashes with the sacred forms of decency, however witty, elegant, and well written, can be noticed only in terms of severe and unequivocal reprehension.<sup>36</sup>

Having read this, or simply having read the reviews of novels in the *Anti-Jacobin*, *British Critic*, or any of the Reviews of the '90s, any novelist must have realized that the way to gain credit with the critics was not to be 'witty', nor 'elegant', nor to write well, as the prospectus put it, but first to avoid any explicit or implicit clash with 'decency', whatever that might mean, and, second, to ensure that their work contained

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<sup>32</sup> *Quarterly Review*, 3 (August 1809), 146.

<sup>33</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 8 (July 1806), 459.

<sup>34</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford, 1975), pp.88-95.

<sup>35</sup> Roper, *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, p.23.

<sup>36</sup> 'Prospectus' for the *New London Review; or Monthly Report of Authors and Books* (1799), a publication which appeared in 1799-1800, quoted in Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, 1930), p.225.

enough 'morality', 'piety', and perhaps loyalty too, to avert any remaining critical misgivings. They must have known, in the words of one novelist of 1805, that all literature was 'either entirely cried down, or else extolled to the skies, not according to its intrinsic merits or defects, but according to the speculative opinions which the writer of it is supposed to entertain.'<sup>37</sup> In this light, it is hardly surprising, that after telling the reviewers that she held them in the greatest respect, and that she hoped to follow them in the paths of virtue, as they advised, Ann Thomas continued her preface with one further attempt to preempt their criticism:

If an Apology be necessary for the political Part of the Novel, permit me to declare, that I could not lose the Opportunity of expressing my Gratitude for that Protection which every Individual enjoys under the British Constitution.<sup>38</sup>

The critics did not censor, then, but managed to maintain an effective control over the creativity of authors, or rather over that great majority of authors who wished to pursue the conventional channels to literary success. No author, whether just starting out, writing a new work with the reviews of their last productions ringing in their ears, or determining to remedy its neglect, could afford to ignore the well-known opinions of the Reviews. Just how effective they demonstrably were in instilling a determinedly *anti-Jacobin* agenda into novel-writing is a question to which I shall return, but, in their great quest to regulate literature, the Reviews were in any case aided by other, perhaps even more dedicated, agents.

The *raison d'être* of the *British Critic* had been clear right from its establishment, its manifesto being repeated in the preface to each succeeding edition and being evident from even the most cursory perusal of its articles. But when its editors proclaimed that their office was 'to wield the arms that we are competent to use, in defence of a pure church and wisely ordered state',<sup>39</sup> this was a call to arms as well as a statement of intent. It not only warned writers what they might expect from critics working for this Review, but it encouraged them to use the means at *their* disposal for the same ends, hoping to inspire these other writers to join the *British Critic's* crusade, to 'wield the pen, and shed the ink' now that Britain was in the most critical 'state of literary warfare'.<sup>40</sup> Many answered the call, or had already concurred with it, having made their own determination to contribute to the nation's security. William Gifford was one, a man who even before editing the *Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner* and the *Quarterly Review*, had written in a private capacity the *Baviad* (1791) and *Mæviad* (1795), dedicated to exposing what he regarded as the errors of modern poetic taste. Roper suggests that Gifford's attacks on the Della Cruscan succeeded in educating succeeding reviewers in what their true office as 'official guardian of the public

<sup>37</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc; Containing Some Views of English and Foreign Manners* [London, 1805], II, 211.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, I, v. See also the extensive preface to the anonymous *The Minstrel; or, Anecdotes of Distinguished Personages in the Fifteenth Century* [London, 1793], which puts Thomas' anxieties in an even clearer light, especially as regards the paradoxical position of a woman writing anti-Jacobin fiction, such a public and political enterprise constituting a transgression against the very conservative orthodoxy they were upholding.

<sup>39</sup> *British Critic*, 'Preface', 16 (July-December 1800), iii.

<sup>40</sup> *British Critic*, 'Preface', 18 (July-December 1801), i.

taste' should be,<sup>41</sup> but attacks on poems like Robert Merry's pro-Revolutionary *The Laurel of Liberty* (1790) also taught the effectual practice of political criticism.

It was Gifford's friend and admirer, T. J. Mathias, who was to become the most striking amongst these autonomous literary vigilantes. His *Pursuits of Literature* (1794-97), was another verse satire of contemporary literature in which, its author was happy to admit, literary merit was entirely subordinate to literature's effect on 'publick order, regulated government, and polished society.' Mathias, like the *British Critic*, considered his undertaking as 'no longer a mere sport of the pen, a light skirmish, or a random shaft', as perhaps Gifford's satires had been, but as a literary crusade: 'our weapons must be instruments of war,' he insisted, 'able to break down the strong holds of anarchy, impiety and rebellion, and mighty to vindicate the powers of legitimate authority.' His satire was 'an instrument, and a powerful instrument, to maintain and enforce publick order, morality, religion, literature, and good manners, in those cases in which the pulpit and the courts of law can seldom interfere'.<sup>42</sup> As well as answering a call to arms, though, Mathias issued one of his own. 'We must *now* all assist in our various capacities, and feel and act as public men', he said, demanding on the one hand an unprecedented level of watchfulness from the guardians of the nation, both official and unofficial ('What I would contend for also is this: that among all who are worthy to be called scholars or legislators, criticism, observation, and watchfulness are peculiarly necessary'), and on the other, a purity and probity of literature from any authors offering their productions to the public, a demand backed up by the threat of his, and if he had his way, the legislators' and critics', condemnation and conviction.<sup>43</sup>

Mathias was even willing to have recourse to the law for authors who dared to transgress the boundaries which the need for good order imposed, but which he himself had designated. Famously, he brought the *Pursuits of Literature* to the zenith of its bombast by threatening Matthew Lewis, M.P. and author of *The Monk* (1796), with legal action. Yet, importantly, his 'discrimination' was not censorship. 'Toleration is fully granted to all opinions,' he stated in the first dialogue, though adding the proviso that this was subject to the laws. In the third dialogue, when he was really getting into his menacing stride, he even reiterated that, 'I am no enemy to the liberty of discussion, and the toleration of opinions; I am for NO literary prescription.'<sup>44</sup> Literature was theoretically free, the author's volition was uncurbed by any statute or censor, but its fate, at the hands of zealots such as Mathias or Gifford, or of the reviewers, was certain if it transgressed against the rules that they themselves had drawn up. What Mathias and Gifford, and what the reviewers also, were doing, was imposing censorship by proxy, a process which meant that authors, forming their novels under the influence of those that had most recently been in the public eye

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<sup>41</sup> Roper, *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, p.79.

<sup>42</sup> T. J. Mathias, 'An Introductory Letter to a Friend' (1798), pp.12-13 and 9, and 'Preface' to 'Dialogue the First' (1794), p.42, *The Pursuits of Literature. A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues. With Notes* [7th edn., London, 1798].

<sup>43</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, 'Preface' to 'Dialogue the First', p.44, and 'Preface' to 'Dialogue the Third' (1796), p.162.

<sup>44</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, 'Dialogue the First', p.61n.c, and 'Preface' to 'Dialogue the Third', p.162.



and conscious of how the critics had treated them, regulated their own output. As such, both the reviewers and the autonomous literary vigilantes like Mathias fit neatly into the conception of an ongoing cyclical relationship between authors, in their continuing productivity, and their reception as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. As a group, novelists modified their output according to the reception of fiction in the marketplace. That reception was most powerfully mediated through these two sets of critics, not only because, as they liked to think, they formed the public's taste, but also because, to the aspiring novelist, they were the most prominent indication of it.

Of course, some novelists went further, not simply obeying the injunctions of the Reviews and independent critics, but answering the *British Critic's* call to arms themselves, taking responsibility for exposing dangerous novels, and using fiction for the same purposes that Mathias and Gifford had used verse. Robert Bisset, as might be expected of the writer who contributed more criticism to the *Anti-Jacobin Review* than anyone save its editor,<sup>45</sup> provides a good example of this collusion between authors and critics. His *Douglas* (1800) and *Modern Literature* (1804) are saturated with admonitions to his errant fellow novelists, along with the occasional note of applause for practitioners whose morals and politics he allowed to pass muster. Even in 1793, Clara Reeve, though she did not single out any of her fellow novelists, was also calling on them to enter the lists in the cause of political and moral probity, at the same time warning how cautious they must be, 'lest poison should be mixed with the food that is offered.' She was just as insistent as Mathias that 'Every one is answerable for the effects of their works', although her vigilance, unlike both his and Bisset's, was solely preventative, not punitive.<sup>46</sup> The influence of her literary reputation, which had not ceased to climb after her celebrated *Old English Baron* (1777), undoubtedly brought her strictures a resonance for aspirant novelists greater than that which either Bisset or Mathias could command. All, though, were collaborators in attempting to manage the production of fiction according to ordinances which they themselves had instituted.

The great lubricant of this self-censoring machine, the motivation for authors to obey the dictates of the self-appointed regulators of literature, was the desire of writers to succeed in their profession, whether their goal was remuneration or acclaim, and the power of the critics, both reviewers and private vigilantes, was ultimately derived from their influence over those who could ultimately make a novelist rich or famous, the novel's consumers. To suppose that purchasers of novels always obeyed the dictates of the critics would, of course, be a mistake. We have already heard de Montluzin declare that she was unable to determine the influence of the reviewers with any certainty, and although the respect with which novelists generally treated them is immediately evident, there is little evidence to establish if the ordinary novel-reader showed similar deference. Equally, there is no reason to credit the reviewers' assertions that they were constantly struggling to impose some decency on the depraved appetites of novel-readers, and

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<sup>45</sup> De Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins*, p.57.

<sup>46</sup> Clara Reeve, *Roger de Clarendon* [London, 1793], III, 231.

the question of the extent to which readers were influenced by critical opinion must remain obscure, there being scant testimony relating how individual readers responded to the critical decrees.<sup>47</sup> Yet it seems likely that novel-readers shared with the reviewers a taste for the morality that dominated criticism,<sup>48</sup> and there were certainly few if any complaints about the policing role the critics took upon themselves. The success of the *British Critic* and *Anti-Jacobin Review*, with their specific agendas, also indicates a sympathy between the literary world and the trends of criticism of the 1790s and 1800s, even if those who bought the periodicals were not exactly the mainstay of the novel trade. For the most part, critical and public opinion did coalesce. Even when they had initially failed to recognize its merits, critics would, given time, unerringly support the most popular fiction. Reviewers and readers shared their regard for the works of Frances Burney and the early works of Charlotte Smith, and, after some initial nonchalance, the critics quickly caught up with public opinion, and were soon extolling the virtues of Ann Radcliffe's gothic romances, even Mathias calling her 'the mighty magician of the MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO' and Bisset grudgingly admiring her work despite some weaknesses regrettable in her, but unforgivable in an inferior writer.<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, for a novelist, the response of the critics to new fiction placed before them was the only readily available indication of how a wider audience might respond to their productions. Vicissimus Knox, writing in 1778-79, supposed that writers would somehow know what the public wanted, and would thus be able to maximize their profits by ignoring the *better judgement* of the critics. He was surely correct in realizing that 'They who write for the public, must gratify the taste of the public', but in claiming that 'In vain are their compositions formed on the model of the best writers, and regulated by the precepts of the most judicious critics, if they conform not to the popular caprice and the mistaken judgement of the vulgar', he set up a discrepancy between critics' and readers' preferences which did not exist.<sup>50</sup> Knox's was the position that affronted critics took, seeking to justify their job as necessary to defend the reading public from itself, but it was also implicit in the critics' position that they had some influence over readers, that their criticism had some power to render a work unpopular without the necessity of any actual censorship. Novelists, for their part, believed in the power of the critics, fearing their verdicts, but were evidently happy to abide by their judgements, and dedicate prefaces, if they thought it might help, to appeasing them.

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<sup>47</sup> See John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers: the 'Edinburgh Review', 1802-1815* [Cambridge, Mass., 1957], p.12 and E. L. de Montluzin, 'Jacobinism and the Reviewers', pp.75-76, for a discussion of this problem.

<sup>48</sup> In Mary Robinson's *The Natural Daughter* it is the scurrilous book-seller Mr. Index who is out of step with what his readers actually want, incredulous when a young girl enters his shop (seemingly doubling as a circulating library) requesting a novel with a title like 'Virtue Rewarded' (II, 41-2).

<sup>49</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, 'Dialogue the First', p.58n.zz and Bisset, *Douglas*, III, 303-305.

<sup>50</sup> Vicissimus Knox, 'Essay V: On Modern Literature', *Essays Moral and Literary* [London, 1778-79], I, 39.

What is important about Knox's theories of cultural production is his realization that most authors were so eager to satisfy those who would ultimately judge their work, either by purchase or reviewing, that they subordinated their own artistic inclinations to the perceived will of the consumers. In Knox's words,

... writers of acknowledged abilities and learning, have been known, when they aimed at popularity, to relinquish real excellence, and adopt a false taste, in opposition to their own judgement.<sup>51</sup>

Few better examples of this can exist than in the writing of the superbly mercenary Charlotte Smith. That she moulded her fiction to the often fleeting demands of her intended audience, to the circumstances of the day, is evident throughout her work, something only emphasised as she continually railed against the conventions of popular fiction only ultimately to comply with them. She provided her audience with exactly what she thought they wanted, that is, what they had previously approved either by spending their money on her books or what the critics took it upon themselves to express on their behalf. She claimed, for example, that she had never relished having to fill her novels with 'love', and she had introduced a cautioning 'friend' to preface a volume of *The Banished Man* (1794), 'reminding' the author that there had never yet been a novel written without some love interest, warning her that any such attempt would surely alienate the general reader, and advising that she had better come up with something more likely to end in a happy marriage or two than the already married women of the first volume.<sup>52</sup> Needless to say, Smith heeded her own counsel and succumbed to the expectations of her readers. Eight years later, when she contemplated a return to novel writing, 'in the hope', as she wrote to a friend, 'of getting 400£ by my imaginary hero', although she talked of herself as too old to 'twaddle about love with spectacles on thy nose', she reluctantly found herself falling back on traditional and popular patterns of fiction, even if she determined to make the work 'as little loving as may be'.<sup>53</sup> And if Smith again and again included the romantic story-lines she abhorred, the ruined castles she mocked, and even her pet-hate, ghosts (in 1794 she had declared herself on the point of giving up novel-writing due to the public's taste for them<sup>54</sup>), she could also include more transient preferences of the public: pro-revolutionary sentiment (1792), anti-revolutionary sentiment (1794), anti-slave trade tableaux (1794), and a young philosopher (1798).

The key to successful novel-writing, Smith believed, was to calibrate one's work to fit the predilections of the market, and she was not alone in this. William Cole, a clergyman novelist agreed. 'What would the world buy', he asked himself rhetorically,

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<sup>51</sup> Knox, 'On Modern Literature', pp.39-40.

<sup>52</sup> Smith, *Banished Man* [London, 1794], II, vi.

<sup>53</sup> Charlotte Smith to Sarah Farr Rose, 30 July 1804; in McKillop, 'Charlotte Smith's Letters', p.246.

<sup>54</sup> 'Avis au Lecteur', *Banished Man*, II, vi. Inevitably, Smith did later introduce a ghost or two into the ruined castle that lies at the heart of *Marchmont* - presumably bowing to what was expected of her - even if they turned out to be spectres of the Radcliffesque, that is explained, variety.

'Novels.' - Is it so? - yet of what sort? Very good, very high seasoned? Perhaps so; but I *cannot* write them! Very bad, very immoral? Possibly so; but I will not write *them*. The world, however, the *polite* world, must be pleased - I must contribute something to it's [*sic*] amusement, or it will contribute nothing to mine. Well then, let me attempt to *oblige* it.

*Si passem, recte! Sed non quocunq modo!*

I write then, candid and *fashionable* reader, to please thee; ...<sup>55</sup>

Cole was being a little facetious, his design, as with so many novelists of the '90s and beyond, being to use the novel as the most expeditious means of inculcating good morals among a population apparently less and less receptive to sermons. Yet even within this rationale was the assumption that the novelist, whether writing fiction for a purpose or for money, was obliged to provide what he or she perceived the audience wanted. As Mrs. Barbauld, one of the most respected literary commentators of the age, reexamining the fiction of the last two decades or so in an introductory essay to a collection of twenty-eight British novels, insisted in 1810: '...it is a fault in *his* [the author's] composition if every circumstance does not answer the reasonable expectations of the reader'.<sup>56</sup> And these were expectations made clear by Elizabeth Inchbald: 'they admire one novel because it puts them in mind of another, which they admired a few days before. By them it is required that a novel should be just like a novel.'<sup>57</sup>

To defy these expectations of the audience was to invite the neglect of the public, something which the young Romantic poets may have been content to risk, but which novelists could ill-afford, whether primarily emulous of either remuneration or a didactic effectiveness. Barbauld's comment brings to mind nothing so much as Jauss's theory of the 'horizon of expectation', a concept he uses to define the formation of the literary canon, and the delineation of literary merit, in terms of the initial appearance of a work beyond the 'horizon' of what a readership expects from literature and the process by which it is gradually subsumed into their conception of what a literary work should be, ceasing to be challenging, and being absorbed into the canon of what is acceptable, and indeed, desirable. Were they to heed the advice of either Barbauld or Cole, writers would deliberately position their productions within this horizon, but, in fact, in the reality of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fiction, most novelists fell into compliance with the norms of their genre by default, without realising it. These works, which require 'no turn toward the horizon of yet-unknown experience', Jauss calls 'culinary' or entertainment art ('Unterhaltungskunst' - what we could call 'kitchen fiction'), and he submits that such productions

<sup>55</sup> Rev. William Cole, *The Contradiction* [London, 1796], 'Preface to the Reader in General', pp.iv-v.

<sup>56</sup> Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *An Essay on the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing and Prefaces Biographical and Critical, from the British Novelists* [London, 1810], I, 55-56. For an analysis of Barbauld's opinions on the ends to which a novelist should be writing, see Catherine E. Moore, "'Ladies... Taking the Pen in Hand': Mrs. Barbauld's Criticism of Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists", in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, eds. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski [Athens, Ohio, 1986], pp.383-97.

<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Inchbald, from an article in *The Artist* (June 1807), reprinted in William Mckee, *Elizabeth Inchbald, Novelist* [Washington D.C., 1935], pp.156-57. R. C. Dallas's comment on this demand for the conventional is also interesting, utilising all the vocabulary of the Revolution Crisis: 'In no system is the levelling principle more prevalent than in the understanding: in the republic of intellect, the slightest pretensions to step out of the croud [*sic*] awaken universal jealousy, and the title of the pretender is rigidly examined' (*Percival; or, Nature Vindicated* [London, 1801], I, vii).



can be characterized by an aesthetics of reception as not demanding any horizontal change, but rather as precisely fulfilling the expectations prescribed by a ruling standard of taste, in that it satisfies the demand for the reproduction of the familiarly beautiful; confirms familiar statements; sanctions wishful notions; makes unusual experiences enjoyable as 'sensations'; or even raises moral problems, but only to 'solve' them in an edifying manner as predecided questions.<sup>58</sup>

Surely, no literary works fit Jauss's notion of that which falls within the horizon of expectation better than the novels of the 1790s and 1800s, the proverbially popular and notoriously cloned productions of the Minerva Press and its many competing equivalents. And as his last phrase suggests, it was not merely the literary style and techniques which are endlessly recapitulated in these third-rate fictions. In all respects, as we shall see, the 'kitchen fiction' of the Revolutionary era remained studiously committed to answering in full the expectations of its audience, a position determined by an inseparable fusion of authors' desire for profit and the desire to benefit the reader.

Authors, though, could approach this position firmly within the horizon of what readers expected from a number of directions. For Barbauld, to transcend the horizon was an artistic failing, for Cole it was a shortcoming that would impair the fiction's power to exert a moral lead, and for Smith, to fail to match up to the expectations of the audience would be financially deleterious. According to Smith, those who could not or would not conform their work to the tenor of the times, were certain to languish with neither fame nor fortune, and Smith, of all novelists, had never been the least coy about acknowledging that this latter reason was the primary motivation for her novel-writing. She had after all presented her thirty-second volume to the public with the confession that her novels had been written 'from necessity, and by no means by choice', and that 'To the pecuniary advantages I derive from them I owe my family's subsistence and my own'.<sup>59</sup> But though few others showed the same candour, they did share her motivation. Eliza Parsons, for instance, in a letter to William Windham asking for some nameless charity, recalled that as a poor, but educated female, 'my needle and pen was all my dependence' and that one of the most successful literary careers of the age was motivated, at least initially, by money: 'Conforming with the taste of the age rather than from inclination,' she recalled, 'I wrote a Novel'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, p.25.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, 'Preface' to *Marchmont*, I, vi-vii.

<sup>60</sup> BL Add.MSS. 37, 914 f.81, Eliza Parsons to William Windham, 14 May 1794?. The work in question, *Miss Meredith* 'was very favourably received and preserved us from immediate wants', an outcome which presumably provided the motivation for the next sixty volumes of novels she was to produce. The money she made from *Woman As She Should Be* (1793), she ashamedly boasted to Windham, 'enabled me to place my 2 daughters with a Capital Mantua-maker, [and] a 3rd as apprentice in a school'. No better illustration of both Parson's perpetual impecuniousness, and that of the class of 'Female Drudges' she represents, is to be found than Nigel Cross's account of her, and their, continual applications to the Royal Literary Fund, established to help indigent authors, for small sums of money to relieve their immediate distresses (*The Common Writer. Life in Nineteenth Century Grub Street* [Cambridge, 1985]). Cross recounts in some detail Parson's career as recorded through her appeals for charity (pp.169-71), but perhaps more revealing are his statistics that of the 100 female authors who applied to the fund, 50% were novelists, including such eminent names as Regina Maria Roche, Elizabeth Helme and Isabella Kelly (p.172). As Cross notes, this suggests that female authors wrote not for 'extra' money, but for their subsistence.

Parsons was a mainstay of the Minerva, one of Lane's top-ten authors, the sort of novelist whom George Daniel had lambasted as willing to write anything Lane wished for the 'enormous bribe' of five pounds per volume. Yet to imagine that novelists were always criticized for writing for money alone would be a mistake. It was perfectly acceptable, downright laudable even, to explain in a preface that a novel was published 'to raise a trivial sum for the benefit of a distressed orphan' or some such; indeed, Smith made her tale of personal woes almost as much a part of her fiction as the adventures of her protagonists (although this eventually began to jar with the critics). When a reviewer did object to the pecuniary motivation of a novel - 'We are very sorry to find by the preface to this novel,' wrote the *Critical* of *The Haunted Castle* (1794), 'that *gain* is the author's chief motive for writing,' - it was 'not because we think that motive is an improper one', but because it was not thought likely that the novel in question would fulfil the author's hopes.<sup>61</sup> It was expected, in other words, that novelists would be literary mercenaries, it was inherent in the genre. They were not out to challenge the nature of literature, but to work within it and succeed in its terms. This was why so many novels were found to be virtually identical, written to a formula, and why the critics so often complained that the same review would suffice for dozens of novels, that novels were 'constructed mechanically' so that 'the mind has no share in the business.'<sup>62</sup> New novelists followed the example of already successful ones, and already successful novelists followed the example of their own previous works. And if the *Monthly* advised authors, 'let not the rare success of two or three masters in this species of composition, tempt you to sink into the lowest class of literary drudges, for poor pay, and public contempt', it was a warning against the unlikelihood of successful emulation not against imitation itself.<sup>63</sup>

Motivated by the promise of profit, authors did what they were told - by their publishers, by their critics, by their market - and as they sought to emulate those novels which had been most successful most recently, and to avoid the blemishes of those which had failed, their work was continually being refined so as to fit the expectations and values of these influences. The production of novels was self-perpetuatingly controlled by a nexus of consumers, those who influenced consumption, and those who managed production, and their directives were constantly refining the demands made of authors, who were for the most part happy to collaborate with these pressures. It was thus that the individual volition of authors, as a group and in their continuing productivity, was being shaped by, and made to accord with, the wishes of society. It is this process, this complicity between authors and the nexus of influences exerting an effect on their writing, that allows us to speculate more fruitfully on the nature of the relationship between authors and the society out of which, and for which, they wrote, and moreover, to see their anti-Jacobin

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<sup>61</sup> *Critical Review*, n.s., 13 (February 1795), 229-30 and 229.

<sup>62</sup> *Analytical Review*, 3 (February 1789), 222 and *Critical Review*, n.s., 1 (March 1791), 349. See also the *Critical Review* (n.s., 12 [December 1794], 472) which suggested that a machine might soon be constructed for the manufacture of novels.

<sup>63</sup> *Monthly Review*, n.s., 4 (January 1791), 93.

fiction as representative of something more than simply their own political opinions. Having considered the mechanics of the process of novel production in theory, it remains, however, to consider whether, how, and to what extent, the nexus of factors exerting a level of control over literary production, were able to impose a specifically conservative agenda on the popular novel.

## 2 *Anti-Jacobinism Imposed*

The nexus of informal censorship that imposed a degree of control on the production of novels during the Revolution Crisis operated in two ways, often simultaneously, expurgating any taint of Jacobinism, whilst fostering an active conservatism. It was the authors themselves who regulated their work, either removing material likely to be construed as seditious, or adding that which might abet the conservative cause. The nexus of forces influencing literary production merely provided both carrots to promote anti-Jacobinism and sticks to deter radicalism, both of which were only effective when authors were responding to their own anxieties, whether principled or mercenary, or complying with the pressures placed upon them, whether voluntarily, unconsciously, or unwillingly.

We have already seen the incentives and deterrents with which those who controlled the circulation and response to literature could cajole authors, but there remains no way to determine to what extent these factors were acting in alignment with, or opposition to, each author's volition. Why, for instance, did Thomas Skinner Surr rework George Lillo's play, *The London Merchant*, of 1731, into an anti-Jacobin novel, *George Barnwell*, in 1798? Should we accept his own reason, that Mrs Siddon's performance as Miss Milwood so impressed him that he felt compelled to rewrite the piece to give the character she had played greater emphasis?<sup>64</sup> Or, considering that the major changes to Lillo's plot lie in the introduction of the new philosopher, Mr. Mental, requiring major reworking, should we conclude that Surr's real motivation was political? Surr was certainly worried about being thought a Jacobin - he included a note to accompany the statement of Mental's radicalism which painstakingly explained, for the benefit of any reader who might assume that he shared them, that 'it was not his wish to *disseminate* principles, which it is his intention to *destroy*' - but does this mean that he had been somehow wheedled into his anti-Jacobinism in an attempt to claim a safe and perhaps profitable political propriety?<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, if Surr himself either self-deludingly or deliberately disingenuously submitted Mrs Siddons as his inspiration, what chance do we have to discover whether it was political principle or pecuniary

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<sup>64</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, I, 'Advertisement'. See also Henry Summerson's novel *Leopold Warndorf* [London, 1800], which he similarly reworked from a play (his own), but toned down so as to remove any topicality, and thus perhaps any danger of being thought to involve himself in the Revolution debate. Most notably, he switched the action from France to Germany and changed the name of one of his characters originally called 'Antoinette'.

<sup>65</sup> Surr, *George Barnwell*, I, 36n.

pragmatism that urged him to turn the frivolous comedy of Lillo into a dedicated satire of the radical danger to Britain? Ultimately, though, why authors produced anti-Jacobin fiction is of little consequence. Given that anti-Jacobin fiction, either conforming by default or by active endeavour, achieved an almost hegemonic prevalence by the end of the eighteenth century, an analysis of the effectiveness of the mechanisms of ensuring this conformity seems crucial.

Just how effective was the nexus? Neither critics, publishers, nor readers had to dissuade Richard Cumberland, for example, from filling his novels with politics - he already objected to it on purely artistic grounds:

All I am bound to do as a story-maker, is, to make a story; I am not bound to reform the constitution of my country in the same breath, nor even (Heaven be thanked!) to overturn it, though that might be the easier task of the two, or, more properly speaking, one and the same thing in its consequences. Nature is my guide; man's nature, not his natural rights: the one ushers me by the straightest avenue to the human heart, the other bewilders me in a maze of metaphysics.<sup>66</sup>

Cumberland is being rather disingenuous here, his ostensible political ambivalence being underlaid by a carefully conspicuous conservatism. But just as he claimed not to be amenable to, or subject to, outside pressure urging him to introduce an ostentatious probity into his work, many authors who did produce actively anti-Jacobin novels, likewise seem to have fallen into that rectitude without requiring external encouragement for their militant conservatism. Jane West, Elizabeth Hamilton, Robert Bisset, and others, produced novels only of an anti-Jacobin tendency, and were generally congratulated rather than converted by the nexus. *Adolphus de Biron*, the loyal effort of Ann Thomas did not even receive a review from the anti-Jacobin periodicals, but judging by her work, she was altruistically patriotic enough to consider herself well recompensed if she was able simply to contribute to the nation's safety. Her novel was published 'for the Authoress' at an obscure provincial press, and the conviction of her prose, every bit as driven as that of even Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges with his own personal, and almost incidentally conservative, agenda, makes it evident that she picked up the pen primarily for the purpose of answering her own call to arms: 'When turbulent Men are so industrious in disseminating Sedition through the land,' she had had one of her sagacious characters say, 'every good Subject, and every true Patriot ought to be vigilant to incite in himself, and in his Neighbour, that Obedience to the Laws, and Respect to the chief Magistrate, which may secure and promote Concord and Quiet.'<sup>67</sup>

Yet, if such authors as these were not actually persuaded into writing their anti-Jacobin fiction by external pressures, they nevertheless were able to benefit from sympathy towards their work. They must have known that they could hope for critical favour, or neutrality at least, and that their efforts in the cause of what they saw as the nation's good would not, unlike that of the radicals, attract only vilification instead

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Cumberland, *Henry* [London, 1795], quoted in *Novel and Romance 1700-1800. A Documentary Record*, ed. Ioan Williams [London, 1970], p.413.

<sup>67</sup> Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*, II, 74.



of remuneration. Likewise, Surr, with his *George Barnwell*, cannot have been unaware that the introduction of anti-Jacobin characters and themes would, in 1798, procure him critical sympathy, and endow his fiction with a certain contemporaneity, not to say voguishness. Whether written for principle or profit, or more likely for both, it is difficult to believe that such a shrewd author as Surr later proved himself to be with his celebrated 'silver fork' novels could be unaware of the effects the inclusion of a host of topical concerns could have on a play almost seventy years old and as familiar to the literary public as any story outside Shakespeare and the Bible.

Indeed, some recent critics have contended that there was something more than voguishness to be gained by the introduction of an overt anti-Jacobin rectitude into fiction; that it could form a screen of correctness from behind which authors might be allowed to pursue their own, perhaps more radical, agendas unchallenged. Thus Claudia Johnson, Eleanor Ty and Ann Jones have suggested that, amongst others, even the ultra-orthodox Elizabeth Hamilton filled her novels with an explicit, or perhaps even superficial, anti-Jacobinism so that she might delve behind the very code of gender propriety that she was ostensibly endorsing.<sup>68</sup> If this is true, then Hamilton and others may be seen to have been deliberately importing an anti-Jacobin probity into their fiction as a response to the pressures of expectation of their market. But even though this proposition is questionable, the fact that even authors with such determinedly personal anti-Jacobin agendas were concerned with the mechanics of their work's reception, as well as its abstract worth, is evident from Hamilton's considered agreement with the opinion of George Robinson, the prospective publisher of her *Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina* (1804), 'concerning the propriety of postponing the publication of a work totally unconnected with the objects that at present most powerfully engage the public mind.'<sup>69</sup> In agreeing with Robinson, Hamilton demonstrates that she was at least aware of the need to regulate her production by the exigencies of the market and not just allow her own volition to act unfettered. Even if Hamilton exercised control over her own work, however, it was still the publisher who held the reins of her productivity, and was even, as here, able to exert control over a commercially successful author. After their own judgement, the publishers were the first line of the nexus controlling the authors.

That Robinson himself had made the recommendation not to publish the new work of a successful author as soon as it was ready for the press begs a number of questions. *Agrippina*, as Hamilton noted, was not another *Hindoo Rajah* or *Modern Philosophers*, was in fact not particularly political at all, save by distant allegory. Had the publisher therefore wished to suggest that it might

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<sup>68</sup> Claudia L. Johnson suggests that Hamilton and others were attempting 'to subvert the anti-Jacobin novel from within, as it were, to use its own conventions against itself, to establish an alternative tradition by working within an existing one in a different way and to a different end' (*Jane Austen. Women, Politics and the Novel* [Chicago, 1988], p.21). Ann H. Jones suggests a similar strategy in her *Ideas and Innovations. Best Sellers of Jane Austen's Age* [New York, 1986] and Eleanor Ty makes the case most ardently in her 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned: Elizabeth Hamilton's Parodic Novel', in *Ariel. A Review of International English Literature*, 22 (October 1991), 111-29 and *Unsex'd Revolutionaries. Five Women Novelists of the 1790s* [Toronto, 1993], pp.13-30.

<sup>69</sup> NLS MS.585, ff.48-49, Letter from Elizabeth Hamilton to George Robinson, 29 November, 1803.

receive a better reception in a less highly charged political climate than was current in a nation just plunged back into war after the Amiens peace? Or did he wish to suggest that the time was riper for another explicitly anti-Jacobin work, either an entirely new production, or a new edition of one of Hamilton's former works? Indeed, Robinson did bring out another, fourth, edition of *Modern Philosophers* in 1804. In either case, the question of whether Robinson was making a narrowly commercial or a more patriotic decision remains unanswered. It is tempting, however, to consider concern about the publication of anti-Jacobin literature in general, and especially Robinson's, as purely mercenary, his name being associated most with radical work. Why should a man who had shifted the *Critical* to a more Foxite stance after acquiring a stake in 1774, and had published William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, care personally about the effect *Agrippina* would have, or fail to have, on the public in 1804? He had even taken over the politically, if not commercially, risky publication of *Caleb Williams* for the second edition of 1796, and coming just two years before Joseph Johnson was gaoled for the best part of a year for publishing Gilbert Wakefield's supposedly seditious *Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff*, this is presumably indicative of either his radicalism, or his unstinting and fearless quest for a profit.<sup>70</sup> Peter Garside has even hinted that Robinson might have deliberately taken up Hamilton's works in order to regain some vestige of respectability in conservative circles, presumably another commercial decision.<sup>71</sup>

Yet for all this, publishers on the whole, Robinson notwithstanding, were both ostensibly loyal, and apparently willing to allow their principles to prevail over their publishing interests, according to what they thought best for the nation, not best for their profits. Rivington's, for example, had been established under the sign of the Bible and Crown in 1711, and John Rivington, who having inherited the business from his father, ran it until his death in 1792, attended services at St. Pauls twice a day, breakfasted every other Monday with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and shut his shop every year on the anniversary of Charles I's execution. Moreover, he was prepared to regulate his publications by his beliefs, becoming official publisher for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge whilst staunchly refusing to publish Wesley, Whitefield, or the like.<sup>72</sup>

The loyalism, or at least Pittitism, of William Lane, founder of the Minerva, cannot be doubted either. Along with his fellow book-seller John Murray I (1745-93), Lane was accused, during the Regency Crisis, of outright bias, their former printer accusing them of ordering him to 'support Mr. PITT through THICK and THIN' and of sending him for printing 'a number of paragraphs, some of which were

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<sup>70</sup> The 'alarms of booksellers' were something explicitly referred to by Godwin in the preface to the second edition of *Caleb Williams*, cited as the reason why the original preface, dealing with the political objectives of the novel, was suppressed in the first, 1794, edition. See *Caleb Williams* [introduced by Maurice Hindle, Harmondsworth, 1988], pp.xi and 3.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Garside, 'Introduction' to Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* [London, 1992], I, xi.

<sup>72</sup> De Montluzin, 'Jacobinism and the Reviewers', pp.24-25. The firm was the natural publisher for the *British Critic*.

wretchedly spelt, against His ROYAL HIGHNESS the PRINCE OF WALES!<sup>73</sup> Whilst the Minerva's initial advertisements spoke, somewhat conventionally, of limiting their productions to those 'such as are founded on the basis of virtue, and have tended to improve the understanding, and to amend the heart', by the middle of the decade a prospectus for the Minerva circulating libraries indicated a tighter, and more political, self-regulation:

The printing department shall be open to such subjects as tend to the public good ... it shall never convey to the happy subjects of this kingdom false founded doctrines or opinions, but attached to the prosperity of the country, it shall be a barrier for its support.<sup>74</sup>

Still, though, we cannot be sure whether this was merely shrewd commercialism on the part of Lane, anxious no doubt to dispel his reputation for spawning novels furthering the progress of vice, of sedition even, or whether this really was the effusion of a deeply held principle. Perhaps an indication that his claims were really little more than a financially motivated rhetoric is to be found in the immediate citation of Robert Bage's *Man As He Is* (1792) as an example of this jealously-guarded probity. And Lane's pledges, after all, did appear in an *advertisement*, a medium designed to influence potential patrons of his libraries and novels. Whatever their motives, Lane, Robinson, and others, were in any case evidently exercising some degree of political regulation over what left their presses. If the house of Rivington had deliberately chosen to publish only 'good' books, then Lane had at least declared his intention of not publishing 'bad'. An anti-Jacobin publishers' list could be arrived at from either direction.

Bearing in mind the fear of insurrection and sedition and the consequent reaction into aggressive loyalism in the 1790s, it seems clear that political probity was a saleable, not to say mandatory, commodity in the years of the Revolution Crisis. These advertisements produced by Lane were testament to this appeal, and marketability, of conservatism. Similarly, there seems to be no other obvious explanation for the sudden appearance of the imprint 'Printed at the Anti-Jacobin Press' - something that has so far escaped the notice of scholarship - than that it was hoped such a cachet would somehow impress prospective readers. At least six works appeared in 1799, with six more in 1800, with this imprimatur on their title page. Five of them were printed by one J. Plymsell and sold by C. Chapple, six printed by Thomas Crowder and published variously by Chapple, Longman and Rees, and Rivingtons, and one bears no printer's name but was published by Cadell and Davies.<sup>75</sup> And if this is a strange assortment of imprints, the subject of the works was equally eclectic, ranging from William Jones' *Six letters on*

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<sup>73</sup> Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1790-1820* [London, 1939], p.13.

<sup>74</sup> Blakey, *Minerva Press*, pp.16-18; and 'Prospectus of the Minerva Library Repository, &c.' in the *Morning Advertiser*, 10 February 1794, p.1; rpt. in facsimile, 8 February 1894.

<sup>75</sup> One other work bears the imprint 'printed by J. Ryder. Sold by J. Scatchard; and at the Anti-Jacobin Office'. It is very possible that there are many more works printed at, or in some way connected with, the 'Anti-Jacobin Press'. My references come from a search of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogues. Only the CD-ROM formats support such a search, and although the ESTC is generally available in this form, I am grateful to, and also reliant on, the staff of the British Library for searches of the CD-ROM version of the NSTC. Since the NSTC is, I understand, far from complete, and even the ESTC is not immune to omissions, I cannot vouch for the comprehensiveness of these figures.

*electricity* (1800) to Frederic Reynold's highly successful and often reprinted play *How To Grow Rich* (1800), from a discussion by a Colonel Tittler about 'whether Scotland has gained, or lost, by an union with England' to a new edition of Charlotte Smith's Covent Garden-performed comedy *What Is She?* (1800), unaltered from earlier editions. The Anti-Jacobin Press could, however, also boast having produced works more in keeping with its name, and some initial connection with the *Anti-Jacobin Review* seems probable if not certain. John Gifford had two editions of a *Letter to the Earl of Lauderdale* printed there in 1800, one of the treatises on Cornwall of Richard Polwhele, vehement opponent of Wollstonecraft and education for the poor, issued from the press, as did a report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons, the final leaf of which comprises a prospectus of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Robert Bisset, another frequent contributor to the *Review*, also had his anti-Jacobin novel *Douglas* (1800) printed there. But any suggested connection does not explain why this particular name for the press was either invented or appropriated by Crowder, Plymsell, or anyone else, nor why the press was used by such an assortment of publishers or why such a diverse collection of works issued from it. Whilst any attempt at answering these questions must remain speculative, it seems not unlikely that the mere words 'Anti-Jacobin Press' were, in themselves, a kind of advert for what lay behind the title page on which they were printed, even if those pages sometimes contained nothing that, even using the loosest of definitions, could be denominated anti-Jacobin.

Both the advertisements of Lane at the Minerva and, quite possibly, the imprimatur of the Anti-Jacobin Press imprint, displayed an enviousness of the sort of favourable publicity that could accrue to publishers who had proved themselves properly principled. The *British Critic*, for instance, complimented 'Mr. Longman's press' for 'what cannot be said of every other from which Novels are born,' - certainly implying, if not naming, the Minerva, - 'that it does not send out anything offensive to good manners and pure morals.'<sup>76</sup> This was still a 'negative' compliment, though, and fear of censure not hope of praise, was probably a more effective check on publishers. The twin fears for a publisher, and thus for their authors, were that a work would not sell, and that it would come to be regarded as seditious. Marchmont, in gaol and contemplating writing a novel to pay his debts, gave voice to Charlotte Smith's appreciation of this latter threat. Not only would publishers be unlikely to take on the work of an unknown, but,

It was besides very probable, that the principal dealers in literary traffic would hesitate at purchasing the work of a prisoner who was likely, besides the disgrace of the connection, to vent in his writing some part of the discontent that imprisonment is very apt to engender. - The passage from discontent to murmurs against the oppression, real or imaginary, is very short; and murmurs may savour of seditious notions, and seditious notions might carry a man nobody knew whither. What rich and substantial vender would hazard anything like this in these times?<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *British Critic*, 12 (July 1798), 74.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Marchmont*, IV, 329-30.



What exactly it was that these publishers were afraid of Smith does not explain, or, at least, not here. The sort of prosecution Joseph Johnson's underwent was certainly one peril a publisher of subversive material might face, but there was also the, probably more immediate, danger to his business, in other words, the former threat, that the novel would not sell. Another fictional publisher, Mr. Type in Edward Mangin's *George the Third* (1807), had learned this lesson by experience. Two years previously (about 1792 in the novel), he had taken on a novel by one of the 'enlightened gentlemen' of the age, but it had not sold at all, 'and no wonder', he recalled,

half of it indeed was unintelligible, and might have gone down; but the rest was intolerable; nothing but sarcasms against intrigue and politeness; and in several parts of it the fellow had cast reflexions on kings and churchmen. - Never was I so taken in before; but I'm resolved the same shan't happen again!

For Mr. Type, these two blades of the nexus were the same: Jacobinism meant no sale and the possibility of an indictment, whether legal or social. He will publish anything now, he explains, so long as 'there was any chance of sale, and none of his being put in the pillory' - the two concomitant halves of the nexus of informal censorship by which public opinion and public legislation controlled the publisher, who controlled his authors.<sup>78</sup> It was a process illustrated well by Smith, who was never shy of complaining about her position as an author. In her *Banished Man*, Smith presented her readers with one Joseph Clapper, a book-seller, and evidently a pastiche of her former publisher, Joseph Bell. One of the many persecutors of another of Smith's pseudo-autobiographical characters, Mrs Denzil, Clapper clearly demonstrates the concerns of publishers as passed on to authors, demanding the speedy production of the next volume of her latest novel, and also,

the Ode to Liberty, mentioned by you as a close to the same: but I shall change the tittle [*sic*] of that, having promis'd the trade that there shall be no liberty at all in the present work; without which assurance they would not have delt for the same.<sup>79</sup>

It should be noted, of course, that the changes Clapper suggests, or enforces, are purely cosmetic. His insistence that the name, rather than the substance, of the offending piece be altered, reveals Smith's opinion that the concern of at least this publisher that sedition should be absent from his publications, was not for the sake of principle, but merely a matter of business.

Even at the moment when Smith was using *The Banished Man* to clear her name of any taint of radicalism still adhering from the pro-Revolutionary *Desmond*, she was revealing, as an author subject to the constraints of the book trade, just how little choice she actually had in the matter. But publishers, even when, like the putative Clapper, they were dictating to authors what could and could not be allowed in their work, were the victims as well as the agents of the nexus influencing literary production. They were

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<sup>78</sup> Mangin, *George the Third. A Novel* [London, 1807], I, 147-48 and 148.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, *The Banished Man*, II, 231. Compare the travails of the hero of Smith's *Marchmont*, who wishes to produce a novel treating of events in France, but soon learns that 'any tendency to political discussion, however liberal or applicable, was not to be tolerated in a sort of work which people took up with no other design than to be amused at the least possible expense of thought' (II, 229). He does not specify exactly what forces, which part of the nexus, would enforce this ban.

simply passing on the pressures which they detected in the market place to their authors. No matter what their own personal sentiments, publishers were concerned lest their productions were debarred either an entrance onto the marketplace or an unprejudiced response when they reached it. To this end they could engage in a degree of censorship over what left their presses. They could issue advertisements, stressing virtue and loyalty, which viewed in this light, seem little more than pre-emptive strikes against criticism, an attempt to gain a favourable reception by capitalizing on the strong loyalist feeling abroad in 1790s and 1800s Britain. They, or their printers, could even endeavour to cultivate a political respectability by appending the legend 'printed at the Anti-Jacobin Press' to their title pages. But, ultimately, the reception of novels, however much publishers might wish to manage it, lay with the buyers and borrowers in the marketplace, and with those who were in a position to influence their opinions, most notably the reviewers.

As soon as an author, no matter for what reason, evinced anxiety about the reception of his or her work, the critics could assume supreme jurisdiction. As the only institutionalized means of conveying a sense of a particular work's merit to the public, and of conveying the public's opinion back to authors, the Reviews were probably the single most effective control acting on literary production. Even Charles Lloyd, friend of the more esoteric, and more consistently critically reviled, Lake Poets, was subject to the critics' sway. His reaction to critical censure with *Edmund Oliver* (1798) and the *Letter to the Anti-Jacobin Reviewers* (1799), as we have seen, fully undermined his proud claim to have hated 'to be thought acting in a system of compliance ... to be pointed to as one of your gulled conformists.'<sup>80</sup> But we should not assume that the Reviews, even for the most mercenary of authors, were in full control of artistic manufacture. It is tempting, for instance, to regard the 'redemption' of Charlotte Smith, the complete transition from *Desmond* to *The Banished Man*, as the result of the opinions of her readers transmitted through the comments of the reviewers, the most audible source of feedback, but such a causality is impossible to substantiate. Though her recantation would seem a perfect paradigm for the working of the nexus on an author's productivity, reviews of *Desmond*, though they found much to criticize, did not noticeably chide the author for her 'Jacobinism'.<sup>81</sup> Nor did the sales of *Desmond* conspicuously fail to

<sup>80</sup> BL Ashley MSS. collection, As.B.1005, Charles Lloyd to Thomas Manning, June 2, 1800.

<sup>81</sup> On *Desmond*, the *Monthly* congratulated Smith on helping to make novels 'vehicles of useful instruction' (n.s., 9 [December 1792], 406); the *Critical* thought the introduction of the Revolution a 'novelty', and though admitting that 'Her politics we cannot always approve of', was happy to let each reader make judgement according to their own taste and opinions (n.s., 6 [September 1792], 100). The *European Magazine* thought 'Desmond as a novel towers far above the common productions of the day' and was 'not inferior to any of Mrs. Smith's former productions' (20 [July 1792], 22-23); whilst the *Analytical*, for all its supposed radical leanings (see Brian Rigby, 'Radical Spectators of the Revolution: the Case of the *Analytical Review*' in *The French Revolution and British Culture*, eds. Ceri Crossley and Ian Small [Oxford, 1989], pp.62-83 and 'The French Revolution and English Literary Radicals: the Case of the *Analytical Review*' in *The Impact of the French Revolution on European Consciousness*, eds. H. T. Mason and W. Doyle [Gloucester, 1989], pp.91-103), expressed few actual opinions in a long review constructed almost entirely of quotations from the novel, one of which was left, without further comment, to notice the references to the Revolution in the novel (13 [August 1792], 428-35). Perhaps the Reviews were persuaded not to inveigh against Smith's politics on account of her literary skill. Even Bisset in 1800 characterized her as 'a lady of good genius who writes democratical novels', as if lamenting rather than censuring (*Douglas*, III, 305).

meet expectations, even if it did make its first entrance into the world just as France had begun to consider exporting the Revolution abroad and eliminating the monarchy, the appearance of the second edition coinciding with the September Massacres. Smith's popularity may have been gradually diminishing after her earlier novels,<sup>82</sup> but *Desmond* was certainly not shunned by a shocked public as some modern critics have asserted.<sup>83</sup> Another London edition appeared within a year, as was the case with most of the novels before 1795 (only *Celestina* (1791) had done better), and there were the customary Irish and French editions. The fact that Smith recanted, then, seems due to a personal conversion, made, like Coleridge's or Wordsworth's have long been held to have been, from a growing horror at unfolding events in France.

The *Monthly* evidently thought as much, its review of *The Banished Man* supposing that 'It is natural that her mind should revolt from the horrors committed in France; and it is equally natural for new converts to be zealous'.<sup>84</sup> The *British Critic* echoed the sentiments, but, significantly, added a note of censure for *Desmond* to its account of *The Banished Man*:

We must not close this article without congratulating the lovers of their King, and the constitution, in the acquisition of an associate like Mrs. Charlotte Smith. Convinced by observation, that the changes in France have only produced rapine and murder, and that the most worthy among the French have been forced to quit the country to avoid inevitable slaughter, she makes full atonement by the virtues of the Banished Man, for the errors of *Desmond*. Such a convert gained, by fair conviction, is a valuable prize to the commonwealth.<sup>85</sup>

And such praise for *The Banished Man*, and *retrospective* criticism for *Desmond*, must have served as a potent example for any aspiring authors of the mid-'90s who had been aware of how one of the age's most prominent novelists was being treated. The *Critical's* review of *The Banished Man* was quite unequivocal. She had written the novel, it said, to furnish her publisher with four more volumes, to give vent to her private grievances, and,

to reinstate herself with the opinion of those who have been offended by the turn in her politics in a former publication, and to do away with suspicion of her having embraced the wrong side of the question.<sup>86</sup>

Amalgamating the first reason, which the reviewer called 'natural', with the third, called 'prudent' (and ignoring the second, the perennial failing of Smith in the eyes of the reviewers, who here called it 'unwise'), we see the effect at least this critic thought the market, goaded by critics, had on artistic

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<sup>82</sup> Roper, surveying the amount of critical attention Smith's novels received, has found that from the publication of *The Banished Man* onwards 'the Reviews showed less interest in Charlotte Smith's work' (p.130).

<sup>83</sup> Hilbish, sadly without supporting her assertion, professes that the novel 'caused a crisis in the author's popularity' (*Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist*, p.147) and Judith Phillips Stanton contends, again without sharing her evidence, that Smith 'risked censure with *Desmond*, and then received it' ('Introduction' to *The Old Manor House*, ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis [Oxford, 1989], p.xix). If there was censure in the Reviews for *Desmond*, it was for its moral, not political, defects, viz. the hero's affair with, and love for, a married woman.

<sup>84</sup> *Monthly Review*, n.s., 16 (February 1795), 135.

<sup>85</sup> *British Critic*, 4 (December 1794), 623.

<sup>86</sup> *Critical Review*, n.s., 13 (March 1795), 275.

production. If the four volumes that Smith presented to her publisher were to be a success, then they had to affirm a position demanded of each author by their potential consumers.

The reviewers, for their part, pursued their self-appointed task, to ensure that no dangerous material reached the trusting reader, with an unrelenting vigour born of the same paranoia that fuelled the conspiracy theories of Barruel, Robison or Playfair. And as with the well-publicized fear of the Illuminati, the reviewers' apprehensions were, judging by their vehemence, both an expression of real dread and a rhetorical and somewhat insidious device to inspire in others a similarly zealous alacrity. The *Anti-Jacobin Review* held that literature had

been rendered by the sceptical, schismatical and disaffected writers of the age, a vehicle for the promulgation of every false, bad, vicious principle, that can corrupt the heart or contaminate the mind of the present and rising generation.

And 'Our novels' in particular, said the same trusted arbiter of taste, were 'often intentionally filled with poison of the most destructive kinds; with sedition, irreligion, and the grossest immorality.'<sup>87</sup> Starting from this premise, the rôle of the Reviews was clear, and their determination to succeed equally manifest: it was necessary to eradicate every trace of Jacobinism from the novel.<sup>88</sup>

This politicization of literary reviewing was not entirely new, for the older Reviews had never been renowned for keeping their politics out of their artistic judgements. Ralph Griffiths, owner and first editor of the *Monthly* called himself 'an Old Whig and a consistent Protestant', and his son, and co-editor, became a colonel in the Volunteers, both infusing the oldest of the Reviews still appearing in the '90s with a patriotic, if not quite conservative, sentiment. The *Critical*, meanwhile, had originally been known to take the yet more 'tory' side in any controversy (when it could be identified), until taking a slightly more

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<sup>87</sup> *Anti-Jacobin Review* 15 (May 1803), 41, and 19 (December 1804), 424. For earlier examples of this paranoia, the prefaces to each volume of the *British Critic* may be consulted, and many reviews continued to speak of, if not quite a conspiracy, then at least a loose assembly of authors working for the same iniquitous ends, e.g. 'Many writers are now very earnestly at work to render the nobility and clergy of this country odious to the people' (review of *Jemima, a Novel* [1795], *British Critic*, 8 [August 1796], 181).

<sup>88</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the satirical sallies of some of the more intrepid authors, who dared to subvert the convention of attempting to placate the critics with obsequious prefaces by inserting their own mock reviews in their place. Some are particularly interesting since they give not only the perceived characteristics of each periodical but lampoon their fanatical hunt for the slightest whiff of Jacobinism. Isaac D'Israeli, in his 'Advertisement', subtitled 'The Reviewers Anticipated', to his novel *Flim-Flams* (1805), burlesques the *British Critic*, the *Monthly*, the *Critical* and the *Imperial Review*, before getting round to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, tipped off about the novel, he says, by two 'police magistrates'. Its putative review emphasises at least this author's understanding of what any novel, even a harmless *jeu d'esprit* (which includes an anti-Jacobin touch or two) by a veteran anti-Jacobin, could expect from the critics: 'so insidious and wicked is this work, that it entirely concerns both *politics and religion!!!* Next month we shall be able to unravel the whose of this thickly-woven plot. The author has long been known on the Continent as a confidential intimate of *Weishaupt* and is secretary to the conspiracy of the *Illuminati!* - He evidently betrays himself by the title of his Index - an illuminating Index!!' - which D'Israeli had indeed titled his index (*Flim-Flams! or, the Life and Errors of My Uncle, and the Amours of my Aunt!* [London, 1805], I, xiv). William Beckford, writing as Miss J. A. M. Jenks, was similarly scornful of the Reviews' political agenda. An appendix to his *Azemia* is addressed 'To the Reviewers of all the Reviews', but especially targets the paranoia of the *British Critic*, a supposed review from which he presents. It complains of some passages 'which the evil disposed might construe into reflections on the manners of the upper ranks - a style which, at this period, should by no means be admitted by any lover of good order' and to advise the author 'never to make the personages of her history (even when speaking in character) retail common-place, we might almost say Jacobinical common-place, on the condition of the poor. - To our certain knowledge, no ground for any such remark does exist, or can exist, under the present happy, fortunate, flourishing, and glorious state of this country' (*Azemia, A Novel* [2nd edn., London, 1798], II, 233, 252-53). If Beckford, one of the richest men in Britain and already disgraced in the eyes of the public, was bold enough to ignore the warning, many other would-be novelists would surely not be.



Foxite turn towards the end of the century.<sup>89</sup> But the roots of the *Anti-Jacobin* and *British Critic's* political criticism were not to be found in these antecedents, but rather in the traditional critical attitude to fiction. The novel, in the opinion of the reviewers, had fallen from the pre-lapsarian days of Richardson and Fielding, and carried the weight of its sin throughout its successive incarnations, the expansion of its audience in the 1780s and '90s only exacerbating the inherent evil. Only a handful of authors had managed to gain any lasting critical approval in the 1770s and '80s, and although Burney, Reeve and Radcliffe, along with a few others, had been able to achieve a degree of success in their day, the disdainful attitude of the *Anti-Jacobin* and *British Critic* was built upon this general antipathy. Their attitude that all fiction was guilty until proven politically innocent, or even positively useful, was built upon the same tendency to write off all novels in literary terms until they had proved themselves to be of outstanding merit. There was, in other words, only a very small distance between the *Anti-Jacobin* telling its readers that all novels were written expressly for the purpose of undermining the political and moral health of the nation, and the reviewers of the *Monthly* or *Critical* expressing the opinion that ninety-nine percent of the novels received were not worth the paper they were written on. Either way, the genre was almost irredeemably flawed, and fully deserving of the most exacting scrutiny.

In the early days of the Revolution, in the heyday of the 'Jacobin novel', radicalism in fiction had been treated with ambivalence by the reviewers, a cause for comment but not necessarily for censure, as we have already seen to have been the case with Smith's *Desmond*. This had been helped, of course, by the fact that many of the Jacobin novels (at least those identified by Gary Kelly, whose survey concentrates on those that were successful<sup>90</sup>) were written by authors not only possessed of talent, but also of strong connections with the Reviews themselves. The *Analytical*, not as radical in its reviewing as its reputation suggests, was perhaps typical in noting the politics of Holcroft's *Anna St Ives* (1792) - 'This novel appears to be written as a vehicle to convey what are called democratical sentiments', - but judging the work only in literary terms: 'Be that as it may, it contains many interesting scenes, which forcibly illustrate what the author evidently wishes to inculcate.'<sup>91</sup>

Perhaps the attention given by the critics to the novels of Holcroft and Bage, Smith and Inchbald, suggests that their literary quality was too rare a thing to be subordinated to narrow political concerns. If so, such indulgence was short-lived, for, by the middle of the decade, political ambivalence could find no place in the reviews. It was still possible for Jacobin novels, in some few cases, to succeed as novels *in spite of* their politics. The *Critical*, for instance, thought Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) on a par with the work of Fielding, Smollett and Burney, but dictated that any future edition must expunge the 'political reflections'. And even as late as 1798, the same periodical noted of Bage's *Hermesprong* (1796) that 'There

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<sup>89</sup> Roper, *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, p.21.

<sup>90</sup> Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* [Oxford, 1976].

<sup>91</sup> *Analytical Review*, 13 (May 1792), 72.

is occasionally a little tincture of the new philosophy, as it is called, and a shade of gloom is thrown upon human life; but the writer is not unsuccessful in his humorous attempts; and, upon the whole, the reader has a chance of becoming wiser and better by a perusal of this work', the word 'but' here taking on a crucial significance.<sup>92</sup> Increasingly, though, literary merit was becoming subordinate to political propriety as the only criterion of criticism, and any taint of Jacobinism was enough to damn a novel irrespective of its artistic worth. The time scale on which this was happening is apparent from Roper's survey of some twenty-eight reviews of what he calls 'reforming or revolutionary novels of purpose', all appearing before 1800. Only six were favourable, and three of these were for Bage's *Man As He Is* in 1792. After 1792, only the increasingly 'liberal' *Analytical* continued to praise any Jacobin novel, and then only the works of one author, Mary Hays.<sup>93</sup> As one might expect, the turn to a more scrupulous anti-Jacobinism in the Reviews coincided with the flurry of events in France and Britain at the end of 1792 and the beginning of '93 that so demonstrably signalled the ascendancy of the counter-Revolutionary reaction in Britain. Or put another way, the shift in the attitudes of the *Monthly*, *Critical* and *Analytical* Reviews, with which Roper was most concerned, coincided more or less exactly with the birth of a new publication which embodied all the convictions slowly dawning on the older established organs of criticism, the *British Critic*.

It is immediately clear why the early attitudes of the older periodicals, still, in the early '90s, attempting impartial criticism of what many thought an inherently seditious class of literature, must have been so provocative to the increasingly outraged reviewers who went on to contribute to the *British Critic* and *Anti-Jacobin*. That is not to say that both these Reviews were totally incapable of appreciating literature because of their political anxieties. The *British Critic*, unsurprisingly given that its staff were doubtlessly recruited in large part from existing periodicals, certainly began by affirming the old criteria of criticism - good novels existing 'where the imagination is not suffered to be licentious; where morality and virtue are the end and object; where probability is not violated, nor the passions improperly excited'.<sup>94</sup> It even seemed genuinely regretful that, because of the nation's present danger, it could not recommend what it knew to be fiction of uncommon quality. If Elizabeth Inchbald, for instance, 'had not met with some designing persons, who instilled unjust prejudices into her mind,' an editorial lamented, her *Nature and Art* could have received the acclaim it otherwise deserved.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *Critical Review*, n.s., 11 (July 1794), 290, and 23 (June 1798), 234.

<sup>93</sup> Roper, *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, p.159. The *Analytical* gave good reviews of Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792) and Hays' *Emma Courtney* (1796) and *Victim of Prejudice* (1799). This is in spite of the facts that these novels were often reviewed by other supposed radicals; that the *Monthly* was 'liberal in tone' overall, the *Critical* 'pursued Foxite policies', and the *Analytical* was 'notably radical' (Roper *Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh'*, pp.159-60); and that the works of the radical novelists have generally been regarded as of a higher literary quality than the general run of novel (even the *British Critic* spoke of their 'misapplied talents').

<sup>94</sup> *British Critic*, 3 (March 1794), 279.

<sup>95</sup> 'Preface' to *British Critic*, 7 (January-June 1796), xviii; the review itself (7 [March 1796], 261-65) condemns Inchbald's presentation of weaknesses in those of exalted rank, which marred a work of genius, commenting 'in vulgar minds [i.e. for novel-readers], the transition from contempt and dislike to acts of violence is but too easy' (p.262).

But when a reviewer took it upon him or herself to revise the *British Critic's* manifesto of criticism five years later, a new emphasis had become evident, none of the qualities which good novels had previously required being quite jettisoned, but rather put into a new order. Unabashedly the reviewer told the Review's readers, including of course any potential novelists, that the recommendation of novels would be graded thus:

1st, those which are innocent, instructive, and well written; 2ndly, those which possess only two of these three properties, being deficient in the last mentioned; 3rdly, those which are pernicious in their tendency, whether they are well or ill written. Upon these, we shall set, as deeply as we are able, our mark of reprehension.<sup>96</sup>

And if any would-be novelist, publisher, or reader, wanted verification of this pledge, he or she needed only to wait until November of the same year for a clear example of the complete subordination of literary criticism to political considerations. With Alethea Lewis' novel, *Disobedience*, the reviewer seemed still inclined to favour the work, but obviously felt any such laxity would be a gross dereliction of duty:

There are many democratic traits in this piece, which highly deserve reprehension; and the disposition to decry and degrade the more elevated ranks of society, which forms part of the system of writers of a certain class, is sufficiently prominent in this novel. These very pernicious defects of course temper the commendation, which in other respects, we would gladly bestow.<sup>97</sup>

As for the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, one of its chief contributors, Robert Bisset, who had also been an editor of a literary periodical, made his critical method clear when he had the hero of his first novel become a reviewer and explain his views on the subject:

Douglas replied, that he thought that the importance of works ought not to be rated by their literary excellence, for that many productions, of no great intellectual force, were very beneficial, and others very hurtful to society. 'It is,' I think, 'the business of a reviewer to shew the good of the former, and expose the evil of the latter, according to the probability of their extensive operation.'<sup>98</sup>

The separation of literary merit and political defects evident in the *British Critic* and *Anti-Jacobin* though, ran counter to the tradition of criticism of fiction. Throughout its history, criticism of the novel had either condoned or condemned moral tendency at the same time as artistic value, the two

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<sup>96</sup> *British Critic*, 11 (March 1798), 316.

<sup>97</sup> *British Critic*, 12 (November 1798), 543.

<sup>98</sup> Bisset, *Douglas*, IV, 31-32. Bisset had been editor of the short-lived *Historical Magazine*, established in 1799. He perhaps gives a picture of other factors motivating reviewers in his novel, *Modern Literature* (1804), in which his hero again turns critic: '... many applied to him for his judgement concerning literary works, and on other subjects. Female authors brought him their novels and dissertations, and some of them appeared willing to submit to any terms he chose to prescribe, provided Hamilton would give a favourable review of the productions of their brain. They cared little what their other works may be, if their literary works underwent a favourable investigation. In reviewing the works of men, Hamilton was very fair and impartial. But the effusions of female pens he generally regarded with an eye of indulgence; and, indeed, a critic must be very austere, who, when an agreeable young woman brings her intellectual offspring for his inspection, will very severely scrutinize every part. Observations may be commonplace, but a kiss of the fair deliverer's sweet lips, might convince even Aristarchus himself, that actions in which there is little novelty, may still be very pleasing.... Our hero, in his criticisms upon the productions of ladies, showed that with him at least, the age of chivalry was not gone' (II, 198-99). This last sentence, bearing in mind Burke's famous phrase, gives a political turn to even this admission of the one of the reviewers' more distasteful criteria.

criteria being inseparable. The great progenitors of the novel, it was held, had managed to combine virtue and entertainment, and it was only the Jacobins who had sundered the association by writing regrettably good novels with bad tendencies. Thus it was that reviewers, astonishingly given their antecedents and supposed rôle, evolved an ambivalence to literary merit, when just a few years earlier, it had been politics about which they had been equivocal. An actual distrust of literary merit developed, a review of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, for instance, opining that,

When a work is so directly pointed at every bond which connects society, and at every principle which renders it amiable, its very merits become noxious as they tend to cause its being known to a wider circle.<sup>99</sup>

But if the gravity of the Revolution Crisis, or the single-mindedness of the *British Critic*, caused criticism to depart from its tradition of seeing moral, and now political, rectitude as an indivisible part of artistic literary merit, the reviewers soon seemed to realize that the most efficacious way to attack Jacobin fiction must be to attack that quality which made *Caleb Williams* so dangerous, which caused it to be so attractive to readers, namely its literary merit.

At first, objections made on literary grounds became a shorthand for the more political concerns of the reviewers. The reviewer of Eliza Fenwick's *Secresy* (1795), for example, found it 'One of the wildest romances we have met with', with a catastrophe 'as deeply, as it is absurdly, unfortunate', not wholly incorrect opinions perhaps, but surely attracting the epithets wild and absurd only because, as the reviewer later reveals, it brims with 'a morality, worthy enough of modern France, but far removed (we trust) from the approbation of Englishmen.'<sup>100</sup> Whilst the gap between literary and political criteria was maintained, any supposed low quality of fiction could be used by the reviewers as a stick to beat the Jacobin author. Thus a reviewer of Mary Robinson's *Walsingham* (1797), having scorned her perceived reproaches to the late French court and her encomiums of the virtue of the Revolutionaries, went on to lambast her imagery. In rejecting Rousseau and Voltaire, Robinson excited the critic's ire by saying Britons 'vegetate in the glooms of ignorance'. But when the reviewer closed his or her review by lamenting 'When will authors... cease to surfeit us with such disgusting and depraved absurdities', it was, *ostensibly*, not Robinson's sentiments, but her metaphor, which was found so objectionable - for was not light, rather than gloom, the grand promoter of vegetation?

By 1800, the *British Critic* had refined its techniques of political criticism by proxy. Godwin's *St. Leon* (1799) was castigated for its sterility, lack of originality, and anachronisms, and the author's ignorance of, and inability to depict, the manners of the sixteenth century remarked on at some length. But it was in the list of 'incorrect writing', in which the reviewer darted nimbly from highlighting grammatical errors and the misuse of words to the censure of Godwin's 'panegyric on prostitution' (page references helpfully supplied), that the technique reached its apogee. When the reviewer at length singled

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<sup>99</sup> *British Critic*, 4 (July 1794), 71.

<sup>100</sup> *British Critic*, 6 (November 1795), 345.



out the phrase 'the superfluidities of the rich are a *boon extorted* from the miseries of the poor' as particularly worthy of rebuke, it was only to add 'Who ever heard of a boon being extorted?'<sup>101</sup> Poor literary quality and radicalism had become synonymous.

Evidently, then, by the later '90s, literary criticism was being used as a vehicle for censure of the politics of Jacobin fiction and the premise that Jacobinism and good literature were simply incompatible had been established. This message must have been very clear to any aspiring novelists. Any radicalism in their productions would not only be seized upon and execrated, but would invalidate the whole of their literary endeavours. In fact, the reviewers made it abundantly clear that it was Jacobinism itself that detrimentally affected literary quality.<sup>102</sup> No aspiring author could have missed the warning. Even the typographical mistakes of Edward Henry Illif's *Angelo* (1796) are adduced as indicative of its Jacobinism, and the heinous errors of vocabulary made by its author ('irrecovery', 'dubiety') are subject to the most withering animadversions of the critic: 'Reader, what language is this? It is the jargon of an unfortunate brain, never, undoubtedly, very strong, and entirely turned by the *perfectibility* system.'<sup>103</sup> Yet, once the reviewers had convinced themselves, and they must have hoped, their readers, that the merest taint of the new philosophy entirely undermined any incipient merit in a novel, the errors of a Jacobin novel became something to be grateful for. Illif, indeed, was congratulated for the faults of his novel, his contempt for the laws of language, which according to the reviewer he gloried in despising as much as the laws of society, allowing the critic the luxury of noting 'were he intelligible, there would be no small danger in his rhapsodies'. The same baleful satisfaction at a novel's weaknesses, a strange inversion of the traditional values of the Reviews, could be found in the *British Critic's* appreciation of *The Life and Opinions of Sebaldus Nothinker* (1798), which, however pernicious its irreligion might have been on the Continent, was unlikely to interest anyone in Britain when translated like this.<sup>104</sup>

But behind this flippancy lay an achievement of real significance. Having made an artistic crime of Jacobinism, having set it up in direct opposition to good taste and good writing, few authors, if designing to reach a wide audience, would consider writing a radical novel or even dare to submit their work to the public in a state which could possibly be interpreted as bearing any blemish of Jacobinism. Joseph Wildman's paranoid anticipation of what the critics might make of his *Force of Prejudice* (1799) is typical of this minute circumspection with which the Reviews had so successfully imbued authors.

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<sup>101</sup> *British Critic*, 15 (January 1800), 47-52.

<sup>102</sup> The radical connections of both Mary Hays and Anne Plumptre, the *British Critic* was convinced, had ruined their work, and it offered simple expedients for rectifying the damage and gaining the acclaim of both themselves and, thus, the public. Hays was candidly advised that 'A less limited circle of reading and acquaintance, will, in our opinion, qualify her better to discharge the duties of her sex, as well as to entertain the public by her writings', whilst Plumptre was told that 'a more general communication with society will both improve her pen, and give her more correct ideas of the human character' (*British Critic*, 9 [March 1797], 315 and 11 (May 1798), 563).

<sup>103</sup> *British Critic*, 7 (May 1796), 552.

<sup>104</sup> *British Critic*, 10 (June 1798), 680.

Having reached the 'Conclusion' to his novel Wildman suddenly began to doubt whether his depiction of a character's descent into prostitution had not 'savoured too much of the philosophy of the "New School"', and remembering the treatment that Kotzebue's plays had received in the periodicals for a similar violation of propriety, had felt it absolutely necessary to add - 'as it is possible the same critics may think the like observations may with equal justice, be extended to his character of Augusta,' - that his principles were derived only from the most respectable sources.<sup>105</sup> The reviewers, as both the manifestation of popular opinion most accessible to authors and publishers, and as the opinion-makers of the book buying and borrowing public, had succeeded in ensuring that only those authors, and publishers, whose motivation for writing was actually deliberately and stubbornly Jacobin would continue to attempt to present a radical work before the public. Those committed 'Jacobin' authors - Godwin, Holcroft, Hays, and others - who withdrew from their use of fiction as a medium for radicalism, rather than from the radicalism itself, exemplify this gradual, but inescapable, decline into extinction for the Jacobin novel.

The concern of the reviewers for the eradication of any trace of Jacobinism from the novel was born out of their traditional suspicion for the novel genre. Their recognition that the novel could be a highly successful organ of anti-Jacobin propaganda was slower in materializing, and doubtlessly owed its emergence to the example provided not only by early anti-Jacobin novelists such as Sayer, Reeve, Pye and D'Israeli, but also by the Cheap Repository and the short fictions of Hannah More, Sarah Trimmer and others. I have argued elsewhere that it was the recruitment of the novel for the anti-Jacobin cause that eventually did much to convince the suspicious of its utility, if not quite its innocence, and this is a process that becomes visible in the growing demands made on novels by the reviewers, the recognition that novels were a means of direct access to the public. In 1795, the *British Critic*, for instance, was chiding the author of *Such Follies Are* (1795) for daring to suggest 'That the pride of blood is contemptible', but went on to advise that positive restitution was possible and that the author, as one of the 'Public Instructors', should actively 'give such lessons as the exigencies of the times especially demand',

namely, lessons of order, of just subjection, and of that rational *subordination*, which is so far from being unworthy of free men, that freedom itself cannot exist without it.<sup>106</sup>

By the mid-'90s, then, the Reviews were demanding of novelists not merely a negative rectitude, not merely the absence of discernable Jacobinism, but a deliberate, active, and useful anti-Jacobinism. This might be necessary, in the opinion of the reviewers, simply as a corrective to potentially dangerously political material in a novel. Francis Lathom's *The Midnight Bell* (1798) was censured for omitting it, for relating very sad things of the 'old Bastile' [sic] but saying nothing, by way of compensation, 'of the *new* one, by which the face, as it were, of France has been covered, since the ancient state prison was

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<sup>105</sup> Joseph Wildman, *The Force of Prejudice. A Moral Tale* [London, 1799], II, 307.

<sup>106</sup> *British Critic*, 6 (August 1795), 189.

demolished.'<sup>107</sup> Lathom replied to the demands of the critics for a positive conservatism a year later, parodying, but not necessarily deriding, their anxiety. The literary endeavours of Eliza, a heroine of his *Men and Manners* (1799), having been savaged by the critics, Lathom has the wise Quaker, Parkinson, suggest how to combat their poor and partial discrimination: 'do thee ever make thy pen a servant in the cause of morality,' says he, 'and the world, nay, even the reviewers themselves, however they may condemn thy execution, must protect thy motive; and the approbation of the motive cannot fail to give the warmest satisfaction to thy heart.'<sup>108</sup> If it was merely the satisfaction of her heart that Eliza aspired to, then to write moral, pious, and conservative fiction was its own reward. If the reviewers would *necessarily* applaud such work, authors with perhaps less devout intentions would surely not be slow to attempt to reap these benefits also.

The positive rewards that the reviewers held out for such zealous anti-Jacobinism seem designed to entice authors into compliance. For one thing, in an age when few novels, perhaps only three or four a year, were given the status of a full review, longer than a paragraph or two, a thoroughly anti-Jacobin novel could frequently demand prompt and extensive treatment, stretching over several pages and including lengthy quotation alongside sympathetic critical consideration. The *British Critic* accorded such privileged status to Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah* (1796), Pye's *Democrat* (1795) and *Aristocrat* (1799), West's *Gossip's Story* (1796), *Tale of the Times* (1799) and *Infidel Father* (1802), Brydges' *Arthur Fitz-Albini* (1798) and Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), all classically anti-Jacobin novels, although the omissions from this list (for instance Walker's *Vagabond* (1799), D'Israeli's *Vaurien* (1797), Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers* (1800), all of which received favourable but short notices) demonstrate that even the most anti-Jacobin of novels could not be guaranteed the Reviews' full attention. Nevertheless, the record of anti-Jacobin novels in achieving substantial reviews was better than that of the doyenne of the age, Ann Radcliffe, for one, and the amount of praise bestowed on them in those reviews was second to none.

Clearly, it was the political content of these novels that won them such acclaim, and yet, as with novels possessed merely of a passively anti-Jacobin tendency, their political correctness was endorsed in terms of congratulation for their apparently discernible *literary* merit. The greatest praise bestowed on *Vaurien* (1797) by the *British Critic*, for example, was not that it would save the nation from the threat of the radicals or invasion by the French, but that it was 'evidently the performance of an able pen' and was 'certainly entertaining'.<sup>109</sup> Other classically anti-Jacobin novels received a similarly literary commendation rather than any direct reference to the political merits which had inspired the reviewers' praise. Could it really be the so much maligned and notoriously dreary Henry James Pye, and writing a Minerva novel

<sup>107</sup> *British Critic*, 12 (September 1798), 304.

<sup>108</sup> Lathom, *Men and Manners*, IV, 269.

<sup>109</sup> *British Critic*, 9 (March 1797), 317.

too, whose *Aristocrat* (1799) was called 'agreeable', 'remarkably well-written', 'pleasing', 'the elegant amusements of a well-informed and accomplished writer', very refreshing after the usual 'trash which crowd the shelves of circulating libraries'? Even if the reviewer knew the author to be the Poet Laureate, these compliments were surely owing mostly to the 'religion, morality, good order, and true English loyalty' that the reviewers observed the author so strenuously asserting throughout, rather than to pure literary merit. Yet selecting quotations from the novel, and summing up the review, the critic chose to amplify not the political value, but Pye's elegance and entertainment.<sup>110</sup> Likewise, the reviewer of Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges *Arthur Fitz-Albini* (1798), having found the 'variety of moral and political reflections, clearly and judiciously conceived, frequently original, and always delivered with energy and elegance' expressed his or her approbation for the novel in terms pertaining to its literary qualities, but evidently complimenting the author on his principles and his effort to disseminate them. '[H]ow refreshing', said the critic, 'to meet with the genuine effusions of a vigorous, well informed and cultivated mind' and to be able to compliment the 'judgement, politeness, and experience' of the author.<sup>111</sup>

On the few occasions that reviewers did separate the literary quality of a novel from its moral and political demeanour, however, it is clear which they regard as more important. Ultimately, whereas literary merit, as we have seen, could not succeed without political probity, a forthright anti-Jacobinism could actually compensate for a lack of genius. Pye and Brydges had surely benefited from this equation, and the *British Critic* eventually admitted that its darling, Jane West, had also not been judged entirely on the the calibre of her novels. She could not be assigned a perpetual place by the side of Fielding, Smollett and Le Sage, the reviewer confided in 1803, but with what the Review called 'more appropriate praise', praise of West's morality, religion and attacks on Voltaire and Rousseau as it turned out, it was able to continue in its applause for all her works.

Compared with the Reviews, the private, independent critics, who took it upon themselves to expunge all traces of Jacobinism from the novel, and to encourage an anti-Jacobinism as fervent as their own, could have only a much more limited effect on the production of novels. Both the number and quality of such satires was never very high in any case, as W. L. Renwick has lamented in his survey of literature from 1789 to 1815, calling the best, or at least most intense, anti-Jacobin satirist, T. J. Mathias, 'astonishingly inefficient'.<sup>112</sup> Their attacks also reached a much smaller readership than the established Reviews and their opinions lacked the 'official' status of the major periodicals, however spurious that might have been. Moreover, they had only a very tangential relationship to the opinion of the reading

<sup>110</sup> *British Critic*, 13 (March 1799), 297-302.

<sup>111</sup> *British Critic*, 13 (January 1799), 66-67.

<sup>112</sup> W. L. Renwick, *The Rise of the Romantics 1789-1815. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Jane Austen*, vol. 11 of *The Oxford History of English Literature*, [Oxford, 1963], pp.30-31. Renwick speculates rather implausibly that in the 1790s and 1800s, 'great events stirred men's moral, imaginative, and emotional natures too deeply for satire', an assertion surely not unconnected with the omission from his survey of virtually all anti-Jacobin novelists (p.31).



public, and it was this formative, or at least reflective, power of the Reviews that gave them such significance to would-be novelists. Indeed, the diatribes of individuals could always be attributed to motives little removed from personal animosity or admiration. Mathias, for instance, called his friend and role-model William Gifford, 'the most correct poetical writer I have read, since the days of Pope,' when no-one else had been particularly anxious to draw such a grand comparison,<sup>113</sup> and his enemies, men and women whom he *made* the object of a private crusade even if they had not originally been personal adversaries, remained figures of perpetual contempt. Inchbald and Robinson, and even Smith, were never to redeem themselves, in his eyes, nor those of Bisset, after their initial identification as being 'tainted with democracy'.<sup>114</sup>

Yet, it was the personal and 'unofficial' nature of his satire that freed Mathias, and others, from any remaining scruples about having to treat writers with a vestige of fairness, especially in regard to their literary merits, a position the Reviews had been moving towards, but could never, without entirely defying their very *raison d'être*, achieve. For Mathias, Godwin was 'a monster whose faults are not compensated for by a single excellence,' and his works were both 'trite and dangerous' - his characteristically confused assertion of the necessary conjunction between the Jacobin and the poor writer.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, the tradition of the private satire sanctioned venomous attacks on individuals to an extent that the Reviews, at least before the *Anti-Jacobin* and *Edinburgh*, could or would not match. Just as Gifford's triumphant assaults on the Della Cruscans had had no place in a periodical, so Mathias' most notable onslaught was also too personal for even the belligerent Reviews of the mid-'90s. Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) was the publication, 'too peculiar and too important to be passed over in a general reprehension,' that excited Mathias' greatest ire, and it was to the law of the land that he turned as the ultimate sanction. 'I believe,' declared Mathias, that one particular passage in which Lewis had declared parts of the Bible to be too risqué for young readers, 'is indictable at common law,' and he went on to suggest precedents for legal action on the grounds of blasphemy.<sup>116</sup> Lewis, even though an M.P., could not withstand the threat of legal action, nor the infamy which had been generated, and as well as being forced out of politics, and

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<sup>113</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, p.155.

<sup>114</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, p.58n.zz.

<sup>115</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, p.367n.r (translated from the Latin in the 1812 ed., p.453). It had to remain a confused assertion because Mathias sometimes found himself still having to admit grudgingly an unfavoured writer's ability, there being a necessity to warn off any credulous reader in danger of being taken in. In his treatment of *Caleb Williams*, the contradictions are apparent:

Godwin's dry page no statesman e'er believe'd,  
Though fiction aids, what sophistry conceiv'd;  
Genius may droop o'er Falkland's funeral cry;  
No patriot weeps, when gifted villains die (pp.210-12).

With a similar lack of regard for literary merit, Mathias could even find praise for Henry Pye, politically sound but universally maligned as a poet, although he had to admit that when Pye's verses were read to five different regiments at Barham Downs, all the front ranks had dropped their arms and were found to be asleep before he had half finished (p.122n.x).

<sup>116</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, pp.246, 239, and 239n.

eventually out of the country, by the scandal, he was never to write another novel.<sup>117</sup> It was in this sense, despite the poor quality, limited circulation and little credence given to these satires, that a figure like Mathias could exert an influence, well beyond the limited literary significance that Renwick noted, on aspiring novelists concerned with the reception of their own works. Anxious to avoid the fate of Lewis or Godwin, novelists could only have regarded the works of Mathias with a sense of circumspection almost certain to develop into self-censorship. Indeed, Mathias' calls for the 'Legislature and all the Magistrates of Great Britain' to control 'by the law and by the law alone, ... all the spawn of lewdness, infidelity, and democracy, in their vigour or in their dotage', and more particularly, 'to repress by law such popular works or novels as THE MONK', must have cast a shadow, almost as effectual as the substance, of government censorship of literature.<sup>118</sup>

That Mathias's call was heeded by at least one author is evident from the use, by George Walker, of a passage from *The Pursuits of Literature* as an epigraph for *The Vagabond* (1799). It is also a reminder that Mathias, like the other agents of the nexus, aimed not only to eradicate radicalism but to foster anti-Jacobinism. Walker allowed Mathias's words about 'The wayward nature of the time, and the paramount necessity of securing the kingdom her political and religious existence', which 'urged me to this endeavour to preserve them', to stand as an explanation of his own sudden conversion from the pseudo-Jacobinism of his *Theodore Cyphon; or, the Benevolent Jew* (1796), a novel unmistakably cast in the mould of *Caleb Williams*, to his next novel, the ultra-conservative *Vagabond* (1799).<sup>119</sup> The implication is that the author underwent a personal and heart-felt conversion, inspired by his realisation of the nation's peril. Yet with Walker, it is impossible to avoid speculating that there were more mercenary motivations at work, or, in other words, that his authorial volition was being swayed by external pressures, both dissuading him from radical fiction or encouraging him towards conservatism. Even in *Theodore Cyphon*, he had felt it necessary to insert a few scattered passages, unconnected to the narrative and running counter to the tenor of the novel, to evidence his disapproval of 'some modern reformers, who talk of liberty', presumably as a sop to those who might be offended at his picture of a hero's persecution under the British constitution.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, as Marilyn Butler has pointed out, Walker, as a shrewd London book-seller, 'evidently knew what sold', and his progression from Radcliffe-like fiction in the early '90s, via a Godwinian novel in 1796, to a classically anti-Jacobin novel in 1799, must at least suggest that he altered his productions to suit the public's changing tastes.<sup>121</sup> With Walker, we realize that the commercial

<sup>117</sup> See André Parreaux, *The Publication of 'The Monk': A Literary Event, 1796-1798* [Paris, 1960], *passim*, for details.

<sup>118</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, p.366n.

<sup>119</sup> George Walker, *The Vagabond, a Novel* [London, 1799], I, iii.

<sup>120</sup> George Walker, *Theodore Cyphon; or, the Benevolent Jew* [1796; rpt. London, 1823], III, 209n.

<sup>121</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p.111.

benefits of anti-Jacobinism were as important a factor as the disincentives to Jacobinism imposed by the concerted campaign of the Reviews or the ravings of Mathias.

Ultimately though, if Walker the book-seller imposed controls on Walker the writer, it was only in accord with his perception of the will of the public, for, by 1799, an almost hegemonic conservatism had asserted itself throughout Britain. I have argued that a nexus of forces exerting themselves on novelists not only reflected, but also passed on this domineering conservatism to authors, either forming their anti-Jacobinism by reflecting that of their market, or insisting on an anti-Jacobinism so vehemently that authors aspiring to success were afraid not to submit. And so successful was this nexus, comprised of critics, both public and private, and of those involved in bringing novels from the authors to their readers, that by the early years of the nineteenth century, Godwin, Holcroft, and the other Jacobin authors had ceased writing radical novels and more than three dozen almost formulaic anti-Jacobin novels had appeared within eight years. Indeed, by Waterloo, satirists of modern literature could, almost with reluctance, dismiss the spectre of Jacobinism as unworthy of their attacks. George Daniel, for instance, author of *The Modern Dunciad* (1814), having first noted that the Della Cruscan Rosa Matilda's 'woeful madrigals' had ceased to be read and that Matthew Lewis no longer 'the tender maid affrights' - tributes to Gifford and Mathias respectively - was forced to ask himself what there was left that could possibly provoke his muse?

- the blinded school,  
Whose greatest boast was that it err'd by rule  
That philosophic hoarde of fools and knaves  
Has fall'n - nor PAINE, nor PRIESTLEY raves;  
Repenting bigots bow and kiss the rod,  
And prostrate nations own the name of God.  
*Reason*, that dang'rous pride of human kind,  
For ever soaring, and for ever blind;  
Prone to distrust when tardy to discern,  
Too weak to compass, yet too proud to learn;  
With shame reviews each ill-digested plan,  
And turns with horror from 'THE RIGHTS OF MAN.'<sup>122</sup>

The novel had not only turned in horror from the rights of man, and from Rousseau, and from Godwin, but had embraced enthusiastically a pervasive anti-Jacobinism. This was achieved neither because all novelists simultaneously underwent personal conversions, nor because they were subjected to either formal or informal censorship. Government had not been forced to legislate, and nor had it offered bribes to novelists, Mathias even going so far as to complain that Pitt was guilty of a 'systematick contempt and neglect of all ability and literary talent.'<sup>123</sup> Novelists had themselves regulated their fiction, but had done

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<sup>122</sup> George Daniel, *The Modern Dunciad, A Satire; with Notes, Biographical and Critical* [4th edn., corrected and enlarged, London, 1816], pp.9-10. The Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue suggests the first edition was published in 1814.

<sup>123</sup> Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, p.126. In fact, Elizabeth Hamilton's biographer records a pension granted to her after the publication of her first two novels, 'as an acknowledgement that her literary talents had been meritoriously exerted in the cause of religion and virtue,' and she assures us that 'the prime minister paid a complimentary tribute to her talents, which enhanced the value

so according to the will of their readers transmitted to them, or perceived to be transmitted to them, through the nexus of critics and publishers, satirists and circulating library owners. At base, this was an economic process, and yet the nexus which acted as an interface between producers and consumers had been able to imbue it with an ideological significance that made novelists into propagandists. Their novels attempted to propagandise their readers, but they were doing so only because they, the authors, had already been proselytised by their readers and the society from which they came. This being the case, it is with a much greater degree of confidence that we can understand the anti-Jacobin novels that have been examined in the foregoing chapters to be an accurate reflection of the society from which they sprang.

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of the gift' (Elizabeth Ogilvie Benger, *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, with a Selection from her Correspondence, and other Unpublished Writing* [London, 1818], pp.165 and 165n.). Such a pension must have been a powerful contribution to the nexus of factors encouraging anti-Jacobinism in fiction, but this is the only recorded instance I have found of Government intervention in the production of novels.



## 10: Conclusion

As to myself, after having for four years heard little else than the voice of commendation, I was at length attacked from every side, and in a style which defied all moderation and decency. No vehicle was too mean, no language too coarse and insulting, by which to convey the venom of my adversaries. The abuse was so often repeated, that at length the bystanders, and perhaps the parties themselves, began to believe what they had so vehemently asserted. The cry spread like a general infection, and I have been told that not even a petty novel for boarding-school misses now ventures to aspire to favour unless it contains some expression of dislike or abhorrence to the new philosophy, and its chief (or shall I say its most voluminous?) English adherent.

- William Godwin, *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr's Spital Sermon* (1801)

The most crucial point to be made about anti-Jacobin novels is that they appeared in much greater numbers than has previously been thought. There were in excess of forty novels published between 1790 and 1805 which were suffused with anti-Jacobinism, with perhaps as many as a hundred more which were anti-Jacobin in parts or to a limited extent.

Yet this is a finding that has raised several difficult questions. As soon as an attempt is made to count these fictions, for instance, the problem of definition has arisen. The question of what actually constitutes an anti-Jacobin novel, although it has run through the whole of my analysis, can never be given a convincingly categorical answer. There were many more ways than one to skin a Jacobin cat, and although there can be no doubt that many novels shared the same basic strategies, strategies which I have isolated and examined in the preceding chapters, it is only superficially the case that 'Novel after novel unashamedly used the same structure', as Marilyn Butler has influentially argued.<sup>1</sup> If it were true, each anti-Jacobin novel might easily be identified, categorised and counted, but Butler's analysis ignores the question of degree. Some novelists were evidently committed propagandists, straining to wring out the last drop of anti-Jacobinism from every character and twist of plot. Others were clearly much less dedicated, and furnished their fiction with only snippets and shades of conservatism, their anti-Jacobinism appearing here and there but evidently not their primary concern. Indeed, if it was the case, as Butler suggests, that every anti-Jacobin novelist 'wrote to a formula' then this only brings into question their anti-Jacobinism, for it would have been an easy matter to adopt that formula without possessing any of the ideological fervour which had originally animated it. In the last two chapters we have seen how, and why, this was often the case.

Indeed, it is this problem of degree which also feeds into the most important question of all: why were so many anti-Jacobin novels produced and consumed in the 1790s and 1800s? It would be convenient, but misguided, to suggest that they were all designed as propaganda, written by committed individuals who wished to contribute their mite to the grand campaign against the Revolutionary menace. This was quite clearly not the case, for, as we have seen, many authors produced work possessed of some

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<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* [Oxford, 1975], p.88.

distinctively anti-Jacobin motifs and characteristics whilst manifesting an ideological ambivalence, or even ambiguity, throughout the rest of their novel or novels. It would be equally convenient to suggest that what anti-Jacobin fiction represents is not propaganda, but an expression of a deeply pervasive, not to say hegemonic, conservative ideology which, co-opting authors into compliance, permeated their fiction without the necessity of working through their conscious volition. Such, after all, was what Godwin believed had happened, being convinced that the condemnation of himself and of new philosophy 'was so often repeated' that at length the whole nation began to believe what his original antagonists 'had so vehemently asserted'. Even petty novels for boarding school misses, his perhaps understandable paranoia persuaded him, had succumbed to what he called this anti-Jacobin 'infection'.<sup>2</sup> Yet Godwin too, in insisting on both the sameness of the novels as well as their ubiquity, was demonstrably not entirely correct. For just as there were many conservative novels which made no mention of Godwin himself, nor even of new philosophy, so there were of course many novels published between the Fall of the Bastille and Waterloo which remained resolutely a-political, lacking in any mention of any aspect of the ideological, moral, political or military war against Jacobinism - novels in which all the characters led 'calm lives' with no 'worries about the French Revolution, or the Napoleonic Wars', as Winston Churchill was to complain of Austen's fiction.<sup>3</sup> If this anti-Jacobin ideology was so pervasive, in other words, why did it not infiltrate these novels too?

More properly, then, anti-Jacobin fiction should be considered as the product of a combination of both the propagandistic intent of a few committed individuals and of the willingness of other authors to take up this ideological conviction despite lacking that underlying dedication to the conservative cause. It cannot be doubted, after all, that Robert Bisset, Elizabeth Hamilton, Jane West or Henry James Pye, to name just four, deliberately took up their pens so that they might contribute to the defeat of Jacobinism, however they individually conceived of it. Nor is it easy to dismiss the influence of the powerful and sophisticated nexus of factors pushing authors into an anti-Jacobin orthodoxy, something discussed in the last chapter. Authors, and their publishers and distributors, were emulous of the success achieved by other anti-Jacobins, perhaps especially those like Hamilton or West who had succeeded in overcoming the lowly reputation of the novel form, and of a woman using it, and had carved out for themselves careers that were both prosperous and respected. Publishers and would-be novelists were influenced by the critics, both those writing for the major Reviews and those acting independently, who almost unanimously took it upon themselves to enforce an anti-Jacobin rectitude. They were also mindful that their work would be borrowed and bought, if at all, by a readership which had shown a preference for works of loyalty and religion. In short, they were worried about the reception of anything deviating from the sanctioned line and equally anxious not to miss out on the rewards offered to the most approved writers of the age. In a sense, this may be considered as the co-option of authors by a dominant ideology, for the

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<sup>2</sup> William Godwin, *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr's Spital Sermon, being a Reply to the Attacks of Dr Parr, Mr Mackintosh, the Author of An Essay on Population, and others* [London, 1801], pp.21-22.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Warren Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* [Basingstoke, 1979], p.5.

values of the dominant groups in society were clearly imposed on those producing fiction to service it. But it was also a mercenary process, such as any other commodity might undergo in a free market, and one which coaxed authors into conservatism because of the financial rewards to be reaped there. As such it was often a voluntary and deliberate strategic decision made by authors or those responsible for releasing their work onto the market. Even if authors were coerced out of producing radical work, no-one was actually forced into writing conservative fiction.

Irrespective of whether they were the product of pure conviction or of more tactical planning the conservative novels of the 1790s and 1800s provide a valuable insight into the conservatism of their age. Conservatism was not new to the '90s of course. Rousseau and Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon, scepticism and promiscuity, nabobs and corrupt nobles - these all had been the frequent themes of furious invective long before the Fall of the Bastille or the formation of the London Corresponding Society. In this sense, Burke did not suddenly invent anti-Jacobinism in 1790 with his *Reflections on the Revolution*, the conservatism of '90s fiction being squarely founded on concerns evident for many decades already. In a novel like Wright's *Solyman and Fatima* of 1791, for instance, the very manifest conservatism lies in its attack on equality, ambition and irreligion, themes which had been present in conservative thought long before the eighteenth century. But the Revolution crisis gave this conservatism a renewed urgency and vigour, which in fact was largely responsible for allowing the novel, such as *Solyman and Fatima*, to become a vehicle for its propagation, the contamination of fiction with politics having been previously regarded as something most earnestly to be avoided by orthodox opinion. Anti-Jacobinism was different to the conservatism of the '70s and '80s because of this sense of crisis, but also because, for the first time, conservatives had something around which they could organise themselves, something against which they could draw up their battle lines, something which endowed their cause with an energising sense of emergency - Jacobinism.

Yet Jacobinism, as we have seen, was the creation of the anti-Jacobins and this is where its great interest lies. The militant anti-Jacobin novelists, like Bisset and Hamilton, chose to construct it in a form which they thought most likely to rouse their readers into the fierce loyalty, patriotism and piety which they thought so necessary for the preservation of the nation. Their conception of Jacobinism, therefore, reveals much about what British society thought most valuable and vulnerable about the *status quo*. Equally, those 'fellow-travellers' who absorbed an almost perfunctory anti-Jacobinism into their work selected the most prominent and most easily assimilable aspects of the anti-Jacobin campaign for inclusion, again telling us much about how conservatism was conceived of by the more non-political public. Reading both these kinds of anti-Jacobin fiction helps to refine our notion of how British conservatism was constituted during, and immediately after, the Revolution crisis, and I have examined in some detail the main principles around which this conservatism was organised in the separate chapters which make up the body of this thesis.

Two points are worth making more explicit here, however. First, although it is hardly surprising that hierarchy, chastity, distrust of theoretical schemes, the horror of revolution, and so on, should form

the foundation of the anti-Jacobin defence of the *status quo*, what remains curious is that the anti-Jacobins very rarely identified Jacobinism as political in any strict sense. The radicalism of the Jacobins portrayed in the conservative novel seldom consisted of any considered plan for constitutional or legislative reform. The narrowly political activities of the British radicals, who in any case make only cameo appearances in anti-Jacobin fiction, are hardly mentioned, and Jacobinism was not characterised as pressing for religious relief or the abolition of the slave trade. When Godwin, Thelwall, Paine or Priestley feature in anti-Jacobin fiction it is not as constitutional reformers, and Fox, Price, Wyvill and Burdett, men renowned for their reformist and even anti-war sentiments, scarcely feature at all. That this should be the case is partly due to the fact that fiction, as a medium, was much more geared to presenting the social and moral challenges to the nation, rather than the political. It was also enabled, of course, by events in France, which seemed less and less political in character, and by the British 'Jacobins', who, by the mid-'90s, had seemed to carry their attack to social proprieties, rather than the political establishment, with Paine's *Age of Reason* and the work of Godwin and Wollstonecraft. Yet for anti-Jacobins to figure Jacobinism as an assault on the socio-moral fabric of Britain, on the manners of her people and not her political institutions, demonstrates that they wished to show the threat faced by Britain in the '90s as unprecedentedly menacing, and far more so than any purely political movement. Additionally the anti-Jacobins sought to create as broad a base for their campaign as was possible. All could unite against the Jacobin monster they created. None of the traits they endowed it with were at all controversial, which must have been the case had they presented it as also in favour of constitutional reform, of religious toleration, or of any other specific political cause.

What is also clear, though, is that the conservatism of the anti-Jacobin novel was only loosely connected with the specific issues and debates of the day. The conservatism which crystallised in fiction had as its motivation the Revolution in France and the radicalism that sprung up in Britain in the early '90s, but it soon veered away and constructed its own enemies, only obliquely related to the real radical danger. We have already seen that anti-Jacobin fiction bore only a loose connection to the contours of the debate on the Revolution. A few anti-Jacobin novels had been published during the heat of the Revolution debate in the early and mid-'90s, but they had been isolated and often, like Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaïde*, rather primitive. By 1797, essentially after the conservatives had secured victory in the debate and the crisis had subsided, a flood of sophisticated anti-Jacobin productions deluged the market, continuing until about 1804. Even in the years that followed, up until and beyond Waterloo, that flood did not quite abate, so that a generation after the Terror and the publication of the *Rights of Man*, discernibly conservative novels, still anti-Jacobin in terms of the Revolution debate, were able to find a niche for themselves in the market. Indeed, it is demonstrable that as the Jacobin danger became more distant, the bark of the anti-Jacobins became louder. In Pye's *Democrat* and D'Israeli's *Vaurien*, published in 1795 and 1797 respectively, the two vaurien characters had criss-crossed Britain searching for indigenous Jacobins to launch a British revolution, but had found precisely none. In Walker's *Vagabond*, of 1799, and Bisset's *Douglas and Modern Literature*, of 1800 and 1804, however, genuine British Jacobins had



abounded and, if we believe these fictions, then insurrection was imminent. With the immediate danger of insurrection in Britain passed, we realise, conservative authors found themselves more at liberty to talk up the Jacobin threat, and possibly thought it more essential that they did so in order to keep their readers from complacency. Pye and D'Israeli had been more anxious about Jacobinism, and more concerned to belittle its plausibility and the extent of its appeal.

This is an important point to be made about conservatism in general in Britain in the 1790s and 1800s. It is convenient to talk of a 'Revolution debate' or a 'Revolution crisis', but by the end of the century both the Revolution and radicalism had receded to the extent that conservatism broke free of its original mooring in real events and anxieties. This free-floating conservatism was then able to develop its own agenda, separating itself from the concerns precipitated by the French Revolution and returning to old, pre-Revolutionary battles (censuring the upwardly mobile and the manners of the great, say, arraigning the educators of the poor or those who argued for sexual emancipation). It still claimed Jacobinism as its extenuation but in reality it was fighting tangential battles against social change which had little to do with the danger of a Jacobin insurrection. Jacobinism, in other words, became a stalking horse for whatever any conservative element within society wished to denounce and attack. This 'liberation' of conservative ideology we can see emerging in the anti-Jacobin novel.

That an anti-Jacobin residue remained in fiction long after the revolutionary threat had receded is also testament to the momentous effect that the Revolution crisis had on the novel. Fiction had been pressed into service to play its part in fighting the radical threat. Being employed in so crucial and glorious a cause had endowed the novel with a respectability which it had not enjoyed since the days of Richardson and Fielding. Once it had become clear that enlistment in this anti-Jacobin campaign secured immunity from disdain, novelists were unwilling to relinquish the source of their new-found regard, and hence, whether deliberately or not, they perpetuated an ostentatious anti-Jacobinism long after it had become ideologically obsolete. The main enemies of fiction - those critics who in the '70s and '80s had condemned the genre for its debilitating effects on, especially, women and the lower orders - had been those who would be at the forefront of the anti-Jacobin campaign in the '90s. But many had been won over by the valiant part the novel had appeared to play in staving off the Jacobin menace. Those who had first commandeered the novel for anti-Jacobinism, insisting that the political novel must be a lawful instrument in such a time of danger (especially since the Jacobins were assuredly using novels for their own purposes), had redeemed the novel in the eyes of many of its most inflexible assailants. In literary terms this was perhaps the most significant legacy of anti-Jacobin fiction. It is certainly true that the novel was gaining an unstoppable momentum by the end of the eighteenth century in any case, but the reputation it was to enjoy in the age of Scott was, at least to an extent, based on the success of West and Hamilton, Smith and Moore, and all those conservative novelists who had imbued fiction with a sense of purpose acceptable to even the genre's sternest critics.

This, then, is one way in which the anti-Jacobin novel was successful. Many novelists were ambitious for respectability, as well as profit, and were able to accomplish it through their conservative

fiction. In another sense, though, it remains impossible to judge the achievement of the anti-Jacobin novel, for there is little evidence to suggest that the novels actually succeeded as propaganda, helping to defeat the forces of radicalism and revolution. An enthusiastic biographer might cite her subject as having effected the reformation of a reader or two with her novels, but this is hardly a proof of any sustained efficacy.<sup>4</sup> After all, many more convincing explanations of the triumph of loyalism in the later 1790s have been proposed, and so it seems sufficient to suggest that conservative fiction played only a minor part in the anti-Jacobin campaign, simply opening up one more front to oppose Jacobinism. As a part of that campaign, though, however modest its success might have been, anti-Jacobin fiction shares the same motivating causes and the same major concerns, exhibiting them to our inspection with a transparency born of the fact that they were, sometimes very clumsily, transplanted into a genre in which they remained conspicuous. Most usefully, then, in terms of the insight it provides into how politics was brought to the people, in terms of how those political ideas were constituted, and in terms of its sheer extent, the anti-Jacobin novel offers a valuable perspective on the nature of the British response to the French Revolution.

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<sup>4</sup> According to Elizabeth Ogilvie Benger's *Memoirs of the Late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton* [London, 1818], *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) caused one of its readers instantly to abjure the follies and absurdities which she had shared with the its new philosophical heroine, Bridgetina Botherim (I, 133).

## Appendix:

### Brief Sketches of the Principal Anti-Jacobin Novels

This appendix contains notes on each of the major anti-Jacobin novels considered in the main text, here treated individually. I supply some bibliographical and biographical details, as well as briefly reviewing the plots and major characters of the novels, but my primary purpose has been to establish the conservative credentials of each work. These vary enormously from novel to novel in terms of both the depth of commitment they exhibit and the ways in which their anti-Jacobinism reveals itself. But this catalogue is not supposed to be a definitive list of all anti-Jacobin novels published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. First there are almost certainly many deeply conservative fictions which will have escaped my searches. But second, I treat here many novels which are only marginally or tangentially anti-Jacobin, novels which appear conservative only when juxtaposed with other more polemical fictions, with which they share some characteristics, but not the militancy that motivated the most manifestly anti-Jacobin novels.

The novels are listed alphabetically by author (unattributed works are listed under 'anonymous'), but when an author has written more than one novel then his or her works are listed chronologically. If any research has been undertaken into the authors and novels in question I have recorded it here, generally in a footnote attached to the section on that author's first listed work. If there is no such note, as is usually the case, then there are no studies of that author available.

#### **Anon., *Asmodeus; or, the Devil in London: A Sketch*. 3 vols., J. F. Hughes, London, 1808**

Anti-Jacobin motifs, language or references could still be counted upon, even as late as 1808, to add a certain valuable contemporaneity to fiction. In *Asmodeus* for example, a novel possibly by Charles Sedley, we find a chapter on the 'Illuminati' and a lengthy description of the failings, and attempted suicide, of Mary Wollstonecraft, apparently introduced for no reason other than it endowed the fiction with a frisson of immediacy. 'Her writings will long be remembered,' records *Asmodeus*, as he guides his companion around the metropolis, 'although their dangerous tendency will be regretted; for whatever of error attached either to her life, or opinions, was the effect of principle - but of principle founded on the chimeras of a visionary' (III, 133-34). Since such an outburst was an isolated occurrence in a work which displayed no sustained conservative intent, the novel must be considered to contain merely the residue of anti-Jacobinism rather than as a fully anti-Jacobin text in its own right. That such a residue remained a part of fiction well into the nineteenth century is not without interest itself though.

#### **Anon., *The Bastille [sic]. Or the History of Charles Townley, a man of the world*. 4 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1789**

The *Critical Review* noticed this novel in June 1789, indicating that when it was first published the Bastille was still standing. It may or may not be significant that a second, probably pirated, Irish edition, produced later in the year, was retitled *Memoirs of Charles Townley*. The novel can hardly be considered anti-Jacobin, but it is of great interest if only because it displays many of the techniques that would become conventional in later conservative fiction.

The action of the novel is conventional. When Charles Townley discovers that he is, in fact, a foundling, he embarks on a picaresque journey around London and pre-Revolutionary Paris. While still in Britain, he encounters a Mr Grub, distinctly a philosopher, but not quite explicitly 'Jacobin' enough, not quite Godwinian enough, to be recognised as one of the species of new philosophers who would evolve so quickly within the next few years. Of course, he could hardly be otherwise, for neither Jacobinism nor Godwinianism had been formulated yet, but their antecedents (or rather the antecedents of the anti-

Jacobins' conceptions of them) were nevertheless clearly evident in Grub's behaviour and rhetoric. He was a man, Charles found, 'who rises above the sordid views of life, who despises wealth and shew, and acts not on the vulgar notions of the world', and a man whose new philosophical points of reference were impeccable, as the impecunious Charles found when Grub urged him to become 'a shoe-maker, or a joiner, as the great Rousseau says'. But the real link between Grub and his new philosopher descendants is apparent in the ways in which he is taken to task for his ridiculous opinions. On the one hand, we find that the way he tries to live his 'primeval', that is to say Rousseauesque, life is ludicrous. His primitive meal, for instance, sufficient, he insists, for all his rational needs, consists of 'coarse bread, rancid cheese, bad vegetables, and sour cider'. And on the other hand we find that Grub's proto-radicalism is very much a pretence, existing as rhetoric only, his ascetic existence merely a cover for his miserliness and, on a more general level, as Charles eventually realises, Grub's plan being to 'assume the semblance of virtues' so as 'to impose on those who have not discernment enough to ... discover worthlessness lurking beneath the mask of universal philanthropy' (Dublin edn.: I, 276, 279). This is exactly the sort of sudden recognition of Jacobin hypocrisy, of new philosophical charlatanism, with which the reader of anti-Jacobin fiction would become very familiar. But it is also a salutary reminder that anti-Jacobin fiction was not a new and mould-breaking form, but rather one that, cuckoo-like, appropriated existing literary models for its new purposes, a technique which facilitated the harmonious marriage of politics and fiction by presenting the reader with familiar patterns which, unlike the out-and-out polemics of earlier anti-Jacobinism, would not affront the diversion-seeking novel-reader.

**Anon., *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School: A Novel. In Three Volumes. By A Disciple of the Old School.* 3 vols., Cuthell & Martin, London, 1803**

In the pointedly-titled *The Chances; or, Nothing of the New School*, the frivolity of the satire of 'your free-debating societies' reminds us that almost a decade had passed since radicalism had posed a serious threat to British national security (and emphasises also how out of step with the times, whether deliberately so or not, were those authors who, even in the years after the Peace of Amiens, still maintained that Jacobinism threatened the nation). In *The Chances*, the ludicrous Mrs Springfield claims, of the debating societies, that 'if truth, upon any one subject of human enquiry, is to be discovered, it must be discovered there,' but it is a claim undermined first by her propensity to dress in men's clothing when she attends, and second by her friends' discovery of her before a magistrate the next morning, having got herself into an altercation with a prostitute. The same light-hearted ridicule attends her when she goes on to dabble in the works of the 'French philosophers, which were now so generally spread throughout Europe' - Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and D'Alembert (II, 123, 146). Likewise, the ideological promptings of the novel serve specifically contemporary purposes, the narrative being largely dominated by a sort of literary press-ganging - an unrelentingly eulogy of the Royal Navy. Though not explicitly anti-Revolutionary, this must still have been anti-Jacobin in the context of the novel's reception in 1803. Our hero, for instance, is urged to sign up for the navy lest Britain 'be doomed to soup-meagre and wooden shoes', and is even advised to 'forget, forget your mother, - remember only that your country is a stake! He who devotes himself to the service of his country, must live only for his country.' Indeed, a section of the novel that deals with a naval mutiny (clearly tapping into its readers' awareness of the Nore and Spithead mutinies of only five years previous to publication) is apparently included so as to recommend the means to avoid such insurgency in the future. Certainly this is not only patriotic novel-writing, but fiction with a politically didactic purpose too (III, 69, 97).

The plot of the novel, punctuated by numerous inset tales of little direct relevance, revolves around the attempts of Abraham Sommers to rid himself of his nephew, our hero, Charles, who stands in the way of his villainous schemes. At the close of the novel Charles is freed from the private madhouse in which he has been imprisoned by a mob of patriotic Britons who refuse to countenance this 'English Bastille' and the novel can end happily.



Anon., *The Citizen's Daughter; or What Might Be*. 1 vol., Vernor & Hood, London, 1804

*The Citizen's Daughter* cannot be classified as a classically anti-Jacobin novel, but, nodding a more than passing acquaintance to both Walker's *Vagabond* and the anonymous *Dorothea*, it deploys many of the stock-in-trades of the anti-Jacobins even if it does manifest only a diminished sense of underlying commitment. The novel charts the adventures of one Marianne Willoughby once her father's folly had subjected her to the attentions of the new philosopher Charles Denham. But this Marianne Willoughby (in contrast to both Marianne and Willoughby in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, published 1811), proves herself immune to Denham's wiles, and marries instead the respectable Lord Morden, living happily until Lucy Rivers (this time strikingly paralleling the behaviour of Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility*) contrives to make them fall out. Eventually, both Denham and Lucy are hanged and Marianne can resume the felicity that her steadfast virtue deserves, but this author, unlike Austen (who, considering the character names, it seems convenient to bring in to stand for all the non-political novelists who were to use variants on this plot in the decades to come), remains anxious to the last to explain that it is not simply *morality*, or *sense*, or any other politically-neutral quantity, that has seen Marianne through, but that 'contrary to the all the enlightened doctrines of the new school,' she 'persevered in the weak prejudices of conjugal felicity in preference to the philanthropic principles of nature and equality' (232). These attacks on new philosophy may have been more tangential to the narrative than had been the case in *The Vagabond* or *Dorothea*, say, but they are still enough to identify *The Citizen's Daughter* as a conservative novel and to show that this author, along with Opie, Bisset and several others, thought such an approach still topical in 1804.

Anon., *Dorothea; or, A Ray of the New Light*. 3 vols., G. G. & J. Robinson, London, 1801

As with so many of the other classic anti-Jacobin novels, *Dorothea* might be summarised simply by saying that the heroine comes into the orbit of new philosophy, becomes seduced by the license it offers her, discovers that what she has thought and done can only lead to anarchy and ruin, and, finally, acknowledges and repents her rashness. As was often the case, it is this recantation that is most illuminating.

After three volumes in which we have watched her contracting the new philosophical disease from the novels of Godwin and Holcroft and falling deeper into it as a result of the ministrations of a new philosophical rogue named Thomas Williams; in which she has deserted the husband who sincerely loves and honours her and absconded to an isolated rural Welsh village; in which she had contaminated that village with the same Godwinianism as had been responsible for her own madness and the consequent death of her child; - after all this, *Dorothea's* frenzy eventually passes (the drastic cure being administered by the Welsh servants who had been infected with her 'flossophy', who take it upon themselves to burgle and beat her) and she admits her mistake:

'Oh!' said *Dorothea*, 'how have I been blinded by the subtle reasonings of imaginary philosophy, till I dismissed from my bosom all its genuine feelings and affections, whilst I expected to supply their place with unnatural stoicism' (III, 108)<sup>1</sup>

Whereas new philosophy was, for *Dorothea*, reasoned, involving the stoical suppression of feelings, the correct way to comprehend the world, and to behave in it, is based on felt, affective principles, we are told. The author's appeal to her readers (which apparently reveals her gender) - 'No, let us be wives, glorying in the performance of our duty: let us be mothers, ready to sacrifice all for the dear helpless beings we produce' - emphasises the point (I, 150). Propriety is not the logical or rational matter which new philosophy claims it to be, but rather the reverse. To attempt to reason a way through life, or through politics, was not only to fall into the snares of Jacobinism, but was virtually tantamount to being a Jacobin.

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<sup>1</sup> Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams*, our author assures us, was particularly responsible for *Dorothea's* new philosophy (I, 14), a fact that gives weight to Peter Marshall's contention that *Dorothea* is a direct attack on Godwin and his novel (*William Godwin* [New Haven, Conn., 1984], p.219). Indeed, the name *Dorothea Melville* cannot but bring to mind Emily Melville, niece of Tyrrel in *Caleb Williams*, and Thomas Williams, *Dorothea's* new philosopher, similarly shares a surname with Godwin's hero.

We can also see that Dorothea has come to recant and reform not by the force of any rational argument, but as a result of the events that have befallen her. As the author puts it, she 'had learnt in this short tale of adversity,' - and not by dint of any advice or arguments imbibed from other sources - 'how weak and helpless a creature she was' (III, 147). This was a hallmark of anti-Jacobin propaganda which was always chary of including any attempt to reason out a defence of the *status quo*, any attempt at rationality being regarded as innately dangerous since it provided readers, who perhaps lacked the discernment to understand the self-evident but sometimes unassertive truth of the conservative position, with the opportunity and material for debating ideological matters which they ought, more properly, to have had dictated to them.

**Anon., *The History of Sir George Warrington; or, the Political Quixote. By the Author of the Female Quixote*. 3 vols., J. Bell, London, 1797<sup>2</sup>**

Both the plot and anti-Jacobin strategy of *Sir George Warrington* are satisfyingly simple. Sir George is a too ardent Northumberland gentleman who reads an array of radical texts and decides to discover more about, and to make his contribution to, the cause of liberty. He travels south but finds at every turn only vice and hypocrisy amongst those his new opinions put him in contact with. He is put on trial for abetting the thievery of a servant, for he had spoken in his presence of all having an equal right to the goods of the world, and of all acts, however larcenous, being governed by nothing but necessity (echoes here of the trial of Thomas Muir, who had been condemned for allowing his servants to read Paine), and eventually he finds himself at the head of a mob setting out, he foolishly thinks, to redress their wrongs, but really animated by less worthy motives and soon degenerating into anarchy. Only once the scales have fallen from his eyes can he marry Lousia, herself only just escaped from Revolutionary France when its convents were savagely destroyed, and thus an embodiment of the horrors which must accrue from revolution.

But *Sir George Warrington* is not a novel dealing principally with the Revolution in France, but rather, like D'Israeli's *Vaurien* and Hamilton's novels, all also written in the last years of the 1790s, its anti-Jacobinism resides in its exposé of British new philosophers, men who quite explicitly have never been abroad and whose ideas had little to do with the Revolution but much to do with the British radical tradition, or a travestied version of it. Sir George may have been initially propelled into his advocacy of new philosophy by reading 'a History of the French Revolution, and a variety of books written evidently in its favour', but it was Paine's *Rights of Man* that finally pushed him into his quixotic quest for 'universal liberty and general equality', which drove him 'almost mad' to forward Jacobinism in Britain. As those who encouraged him in his new convictions knew, were he actually to visit France - and the novel is set, significantly, in 1792-93 - such idealism would vanish in an instant (I, 32-34; II, 123).

*Sir George Warrington* remains the most successful of the many conservative quixote novels, thoroughly integrating an existing fictional pattern and a decisive anti-Jacobinism. Like so many quixotes before him, Sir George sets out believing utterly in a theoretical code of behaviour that had seemed so perfect on the page. By the time he returns, his adventures have exhibited to every reader the utter folly of his new philosophical system, and the way in which those who advocate it do so only for their own private nefarious purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that the title page claims that the novel was written by Charlotte Lennox (1720-1804), and although the Bodleian Library catalogue retains the attribution, there is no biographical or bibliographical evidence to support her authorship. The second edition has 'By the author of the Benevolent Quixote', that is to say Jane Purbeck, which, though still unsafe, sounds a more likely attribution. J. M. S. Tompkins mentions *Sir George Warrington*, and calls the appearance of Lennox's 'name' a 'catchpenny device' (*Popular Novel in England. 1770-1800* [London 1932], p.324n).

Like Wright's *Solyman and Fatima* over ten years previously, *Massouf* requisitioned the format of the Oriental Tale to forward the anti-Jacobin campaign. From the first, the exact allegorical counterparts of the novel's personnel are obvious. Alasnam the Great rules a rich and fertile province by the side of the Tigris, the prosperity of which originates in great measure in the prudence displayed by the Sultan in the choice of his counsellors, 'and particularly by the wise and fortunate election of the Vizier Ayoub' as first minister. Yet Ayoub had, we learn, reluctantly been allowed to retire - and we remember that Pitt had resigned in February 1801, the year before the novel's publication - resigning government to 'the Vizier next in dignity' - Addington, we must presume - but certainly not to Ibrahim, another of the Sultan's advisors, but one given to argue 'not so much from that which did, as from that which ought to exist' - that is to say Fox. When the Sultan soon dies (and George III had been struck by a bout of what seemed insanity in February 1801), both Ayoub and Ibrahim are given charge of the political education of his heir, Massouf, a young man who, in keeping with his youth, ardently believed that he was born to enlighten mankind and remove the errors and absurdities under which they laboured. Naturally, therefore, just as the Prince of Wales had been influenced by Fox, Massouf was at once drawn to the 'simple and beautiful speculations' of Ibrahim, rejecting the complicated and cautious counsels of Ayoub (2-4, 14-16, 30).

Though he wishes to teach even the meanest peasant his rights and to make all his subjects as free as himself, Massouf soon finds that, in the interests of simplicity, it is necessary to run the administration of the nation 'according to the laws promulgated by his ancestors' and he becomes dissatisfied. Asleep one night he dreams that by the use of some slippers placed in his room he can travel through the air, and he soon ends up in a strange land where - and this is no surprise, since, as we later discover, the dream had been artificially induced by Ayoub - his political education continues apace. The country he has arrived in is, in fact, a mirror image of his homeland, a place where the new philosophy, 'the fashion of the day', has proved triumphant, and Porpher, the reflection of Ibrahim, but in this land laid bare as an unbridled sensualist, dominates the political arena. A number of wise and distinctly Burkean characters are to be found, however, who explain in some detail their desire for improvement, but enmity to innovation, as well as offering a commentary on the errors of Porpher and the Godwinian mathematician Professor Zemedin. Zemedin rails against prejudice and in favour of pure reason at a meeting of all the nation's greatest sages apparently held for Massouf's edification. When the academic honours which he claims are withheld, Zemedin leads a violent mob against the Convent, from which Massouf is only able to escape by use of his magic slippers (35-36, 38-39, 76, 132-61).

Within the allegory of the Oriental Tale a further level of displacement is then introduced as Massouf is conducted to a new dystopia within his dream - a 'colony of the enlightened' which, as its name suggests, bears more than a passing resemblance to that found in Walker's *Vagabond*. Two themes dominate the presentation of this new philosophical community. On the one hand, it is the natural laws which ought to bind families together which are specifically displayed as having been violated in the community, for patricide, incest and promiscuity are common. On the other, it is the inefficiency of the community which attracts Massouf's notice, for no-one will undertake any substantial labour, however necessary it may be to the well-being of the community, because they know that were they to be rewarded for it, they would face death as a punishment for seeking to overthrow the strict laws of equality which govern their society. Returning to the nation into which his slippers had originally carried him, Massouf finds Porpher reigning supreme and leading the country into revolution. Now an analogy with France is most pertinent, and just to make it explicit we are shown that each of the leaders who had so devoutly wished for this state of affairs, once it had been achieved, became acutely jealous of one another and strove to establish their own sway, convincing themselves that 'the lives and happiness of thousands' were, as one puts it, 'a slight sacrifice to the attainment of that distinguished situation in society to which his abilities entitled him'. But soon the people rise up of their own accord and attack not only the mosques and their priests, but the Sultan's palace, the Emirs and Viziers, and even Zemedin himself, wreaking havoc throughout the land, everywhere accompanied by 'shrieks of agony, terror and anguish.' Naturally enough, Massouf decides to flee using his magic slippers. Unfortunately for him, he is wearing the wrong pair as he jumps out of the window of Zemedin's tower, but Ayoub deems this a suitable time to release his pupil from the dream, and Massouf wakes back in his palace and ready to rule his nation according to the most approved principles sanctioned by the wisdom of ages. He even gets to marry Ayoub's ward, whose apparition had periodically entered his dream to keep him on the straight and narrow (167-79, 193, 201-202, 207-209).



**Anon., *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc: Containing Some Views of English and Foreign Society*. 3 vols., Cadell & Davies, London, 1805**

Published over a decade after the period which it professes to depict - for this is another novel set loosely during the Terror - *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* centres around the stories of Monsieur De Brinboc, a French nobleman forced into emigration, and his innocent sister, Eugenie. We are first introduced to Eugenie and her brother as they cower in their house in fear of Revolutionary 'banditti or assassins', each week deploring 'the commission of some atrocious deed, or the departure of some acquaintance ... driven into exile in order to escape a greater misfortune' (I, 8-9). As soon as her brother is forced to flee, Eugenie becomes prey to yet another aristocrat-turned-democrat, the Marquis de Chevreuille, a villain who, as in Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne* and Moore's *Mordaunt*, is able to make use of his friendship with one of the Revolution's leaders (here, Marat) to bully the object of his desires into submission.

By 1805, though, the author of *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* scarcely troubles to give de Chevreuille any Revolutionary characteristics whatsoever, stressing the equally dire crimes he committed under the *ancien régime* (which earned him his well-deserved banishment, ended only by the Revolution). He enlists a few new philosophical phrases here and there, but really it is his sexual predation that makes him a Jacobin, not his Jacobinism that makes him a libertine. Likewise, De Brinboc himself is a picaresque hero first and foremost, and a conduit of the author's anti-Jacobinism only second. His travels around Europe are meant to be amusing in the manner of Dr Syntax or Roderick Random, and a good proportion of the incidents are entirely devoid of any political signification. Those episodes which do reflect on the Revolution or new philosophy, though frequent, are scarcely central to the novel. Yet they are always exemplary in their anti-Jacobinism and their mere presence in the fiction testifies to the author's desire to add an ideological dimension to the novel. That he or she should wish to spend so long detailing a very peculiar dream of De Brinboc's, in which the European wars from 1793 to the Peace of Amiens are thinly allegorised; that he or she should include several new philosophical characters and take the trouble to present a cogently argued rebuttal to their opinions; that he or she should steer one protagonist to Switzerland in 1797 so that he might witness the horrors of the French invasion, and another into an encounter with a professed Illuminati so that he might attest to their existence; - that he or she should do all this, strongly suggests that a substantial vestige of the powerful didactic anti-Jacobinism which had once been the entire motivation for certain novels still remained in place, at least for this author (I, 26-35, 241-47; II, 118-20, 62-65).

**Anon., *The Minstrel; or, Anecdotes of Distinguished Personages in the Fifteenth Century*. 3 vols., Hookham and Carpenter, London, 1793**

Like other conservative novels of the early '90s *The Minstrel* adopts the position - vehemently contested by Burke - that the Revolution in France was understandable given the state of its *ancien régime*, but, vitally, that the sort of rebellion seen in France, and certainly any rebellion in a state, such as Britain, which did not possess such a corrupt and repressive regime, was well beyond the pale of acceptable behaviour. Actually, *The Minstrel* is rather on the liberal side, its preface (perhaps suspiciously dated 21 January 1792 - exactly one year before the execution of Louis XVI and at least a year before publication) averring that its author is not surprised that 'other nations, groaning under the yoke of despotism, should seek to relieve themselves from the intolerable pressure,' and even adding that if 'such revolutions are effected on liberal principles' and 'conducted with honour and humanity', she (for the pronouns of the preface pronounce this author a woman) will not dare to censure them. But, she continues, and it is a crucial rider,

that a native of Britain whose constitution might form a model for the new legislators of other nations ... should wish to throw off the mild government of its king, free himself from the salutary restraint of its laws, subvert all order, annihilate all subordination, that he may subject himself, his dearest interests, his property, and his life, to the caprice of a lawless mob, cannot fail of being a matter of amazement to every thinking mind - must be deemed the most glaring insanity (I, iii-iv).



If she disagreed with Burke on the Revolution in France, in other words, she concurred absolutely with him in his contempt for British radicalism, even if she did consider it more an act of folly than the wilful villainy of which Burke accused Price.

Indeed, she introduces her villain, Philip, as something of a disciple of Price, for we first encounter him asserting that Henry VI of England ought to be deposed, having forfeited his right to rule because of his incompetence, the implication being, of course, that he had no absolute right to rule, a view which might have come straight out of Price's *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*. Philip's insistence that the King, 'as incapable of government ... ought to be degraded from it - his office taken from him' and 'given to one who will perform the duties of it' (I, 6) matches perfectly with those of Price, which Burke had taken great delight in targeting in the *Reflections*, that the people had a right to choose their own governors, to cashier them for misconduct and to frame a government for themselves. Philip's further opinion that the monarch 'could plead no right but that from which originated the power of all earthly monarchs, the free voice of the people choosing him their governor' (I, 8) both echoes Price's language and goes beyond the utmost of his claims, and, coming from a character who would also prove himself a dastardly rogue in all other aspects of the narrative, utterly indicts such opinions.

**Anon., *The Siege of Belgrade: An Historical Novel. Translated from a German Manuscript*. '4 vols. in 2', H. D. Symonds, London, 1791**

Like Edward Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaïde*, also published in 1791 and therefore also one of the first anti-Jacobin novels, *The Siege of Belgrade* requisitioned the French Revolution as a warning to British readers.

But if Sayer was demanding that his readers stave off revolution by an appreciation of the manifold blessings of Britain, *The Seige of Belgrade* demanded something more active of its readers - not just the defence of what they had, but an active and eminently necessary reform.

The novel combines a romantic tale of sundered lovers, long-lost relations, gothic castles and licentious villains, all set in 1789 against the background of Catherine the Great's war against the Turks, with a perceptive, not to say prophetic, investigation of the evils of the French and Russian *ancien régimes* and of the revolutions, real and fictional respectively, which have been their result. Our hero is Count Albert Zamoiski, a Pole who has captured the heart of the Empress Catherine, but who loves her ward, Princess Veda. Having seen active service in the war, and having saved both the Empress and Veda from various political and private plots planned by the villain of the piece, Prince Czerskaskoi, Zamoiski is eventually able to marry Veda. She, it has been revealed, is the daughter of Polydorus, a hermit, whose other son, it transpires, is Viscount Leinster, an Irishman and the closest friend of Zamoiski. Only very obliquely, though, does this convoluted plot interlink with the political agenda of the novel, something that is conspicuously ushered into the fiction when Leinster first arrives in Russia full of news from France. Thereafter, revolution becomes a subject that is thoroughly mulled over as the protagonists discover, and then, overturn, the despotic and repressive behaviour of Czerskaskoi, pointedly similar to that of the French aristocrats as Leinster had described it.

The news from Paris is grim. Leinster tells of all the 'sanguinary proceedings' he has witnessed there, and of the Revolutionaries' secret plans to assassinate the King and Queen and alter the succession. Given that he is nominally talking of 1789, and indeed, that the novel itself was published in 1791, this seems rather a-historical, which is to say, rather exaggerated, so as to expose the Revolution, in good anti-Jacobin style, to the maximum amount of censure. Yet this does not seem to be the case, for the greater part of Leinster's thoughts on the Revolution revolve around the abuses perpetrated by the French monarchy and aristocracy, directly responsible, he insists, for precipitating the Revolution. He 'very forcibly described the abstract virtue and necessity of reformation', we are told, and talked of 'the unparalleled injustice of letters de cachet' and the 'horrors of the Bastille' [*sic*], all of which ties in with the novel's sustained condemnation of Czerskaskoi's own feudal abuses (I, 47-48). These also, towards the end of the novel, trigger the people to take justice into their own hands and attack and burn down the villain's 'prodigious gothic pile', exactly as if it were the Russian Bastille, an act which cannot be anything other than understandable in the light of the prince's previous conduct but is highly reprobated by Leinster and Zamoiski, who ultimately have to use force against the peasants to restore order (II, 129-32). If *The Seige of Belgrade* has a clear point to make, then, it is that revolution is to be shunned, but that the reformation of the élite is the surest way to avoid it. It was a somewhat Evangelical conviction which,

although rather ahead of its time in 1791, fully represented one of the major strands of the responses to the French Revolution as it was to develop in Britain in the '90s.

**Anon., *Such Follies Are: A Novel*. 2 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1795**

*Such Follies Are* is a striking and important novel since it determinedly and outspokenly sought to criticise the British nobility as so degenerate that the safety of the nation must depend on their immediate reform. Alongside this critique, however, the fiction also contains a concerted attempt to compensate for the presentation of power's abuse by a prominent and blunt loyalism which displays a clear consciousness of the dangers of appearing too radical in the mid-1790s and even seems specifically designed to absolve the author of any imputation of Jacobinism.

At the opening of the novel, Mr Hanbury, a retired London merchant, arrives with his family in the quiet southern English village dominated by the uncompromisingly aristocratical Seaforths. Thereafter, the main action of the novel centres around the Hanburys' ruthless exposure of the Seaforths' corruption, and their campaign to reform them carried out first by means of advice, then by compulsion, and, ultimately, by a redemptive marriage. Yet even in the midst of the campaign praise is consistently lavished on the British constitution, with Hanbury being continually made to emphasise that he has never been, nor ever will be, a leveller, that he would always seek to 'prevent the mercenary and ignorant from levelling even with the dust the dignity of the British constitution, which contains in its structure all that is precious to civilized society,' and that he has absolute faith in the institution of aristocracy as the support of the nation (I, 63, 123, 134-35).

**James Barton, *The Remorseless Assassin; or the Dangers of Enthusiasm*. 2 vols., J. F. Hughes, London, 1803**

*The Remorseless Assassin* attempted to target the dangers of sensibility rather than any more specifically political transgression, and yet Barton characterises his villain, the wicked Theodore, in typical anti-Jacobin fashion as 'a serpent, an insidious incendiary,' and a man who has - as his identification as the 'remorseless assassin' suggests - some underlying logic for his villainy rather than merely the wilful depravity of a Lovelace (II, 172). This is a novel, in other words, which illustrates how parallel the anti-Jacobin and the entirely a-political novel run and how they have frequent points of intersection.

**Robert Bisset, *Douglas; or, the Highlander*. A Novel. 4 vols., 'Printed at the Anti-Jacobin Press' for Chapple, Hurst & Kelly, London, 1800<sup>3</sup>**

Perhaps more than any other figure, Robert Bisset understood Jacobinism as an insidious conspiracy, employing numerous strategies in order to undermine the British way of life - or at least this is what he wanted his readers to believe. Although he also wrote a *Life of Burke* (1798) and a rather premature *History of George III* in 1804, and although he was also a frequent contributor to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, he saw it as his especial task to combat Jacobinism as it attempted to spread its poison through the medium of novels to a readership of whose powers of discrimination he had no very high opinion. It was probably his conception of what this self-appointed task entailed which made him appear such a dedicated, not to say paranoid, Jacobin-hunter, for he was anxious that his targeted audience ought, by any means at his disposal, to be made aware of the danger which threatened them, and that they be taught, or compelled, to resist it.

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<sup>3</sup> Despite its frequent citation as an anti-Jacobin novel, Butler provides the only (brief) survey of *Douglas* so far attempted (*Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p.112-13), whilst *Modern Literature* has received no critical analysis whatsoever.

Bisset constructs a hierarchy of iniquity then, hardly bothering to attack 'the most strenuous and direct supporters of levelling principles' (he specifies Priestley), for their arcane reasoning could scarcely destabilise state and society on its own, and devoting not much more attention to the 'more indirect and desultory abettors, the metaphysical jargonists' (Godwin), whose specious arguments also actually touch few Britons. His real rancour is directed at the 'parrots of metaphysical jargonists, who endeavour to explain and familiarise their doctrines in novels and plays, and declamatory pamphlets,' whose effect will surely be to 'suppress all kind affections, all regard to the most endearing relations of civil and social life; [to] destroy institutions that preserve rational creatures from the indiscriminate sensuality of beasts; and [to] annihilate government, order, property, and morals' (III, 32-33).<sup>4</sup>

What soon becomes clear, though, is that all Bisset's attacks are essentially bluster. His anti-Jacobin technique relied on exposure alone, rather than any attempt to disprove any article of new philosophy. To point each danger out, in very pejorative terms of course, was enough to indict it, Bisset knew, and he never attempted to reason into submission the Jacobinism which he had identified. Undoubtedly this was a successful technique, but it was also one adapted to its time. By 1800 Bisset knew that his task was not to convert his readers out of radicalism and into a political quietude. That had already been accomplished, and consequently Bisset had no need to prove his case but rather sought to restate it with an emphatic vigour which might consolidate the anti-Jacobin victory.

Both Bisset's novels are set in the early 1790s however, doubtlessly so that he might with some degree of legitimacy show Jacobinism at its most menacing. The plot of *Douglas*, such as it is, is little more than a vehicle for his anti-Jacobin observations and, indeed, is more or less identical with that of *Modern Literature*. Douglas is of noble Scottish lineage, but is usurped by a vicious and politically suspect impostor, whose eventual removal from the Laird's household signals the end of our hero's picaresque, and highly instructive, peregrinations, and his return to his rightful place at the head of the social order. It is the subsidiary characters who provide the interest, however. Bisset provides delightful Jacobins, generally dense, deformed or deranged, or all three, and he interjects amusing cameos, not hesitating to introduce Burke as one of his characters, whom he allows to be rather ludicrously prescient (given that Burke, ostensibly depicted in the early '90s, is extolled for 'predicting' events which had already happened by the time of the novel's publication). Even Paine features, possibly, as an impertinent runaway exciseman (II, 297-99, 233-38). But it is a friend of Douglas, a Mr Wilson, who is perhaps most revealing, both of the response to the Revolution in Britain and of Bisset's understanding of just what comprised the Jacobinism he loathed. Wilson seems designed to be a representation of that large part of British society which had initially welcomed the French Revolution when it had first erupted, when it had seemed to promise the liberation of a nation enslaved by despotism, but which had gradually reassessed and then retracted its support. Certainly, Wilson does begin to reconsider his pro-Revolutionary position in about 1792, yet according to Bisset, it is less the events of that year which change his mind than might have been expected. Douglas, Bisset reports, 'had the satisfaction to find, that as the features of the *new philosophy* became more prominent, Wilson became much cooler in his approbation of the French revolution' (III, 17). Wilson, in other words, does go through the standard transition that we know many Britons went through in the early '90s, and he even goes so far as to pen a tract arguing against Jacobinism. Yet Bisset suggests that Wilson comes to abjure the French Revolution only because he comes to understand the evils of new philosophy, and not because of the course the Revolution takes, nor because of any tangible threat actually offered by France. In effect, Bisset had shifted the impetus of anti-Jacobinism away from the French Revolution, from the French scoundrels who had led it and the French armies which had exported it, to the British radicals, to the new philosophers whom he makes his principal targets. Put bluntly, by 1800 anti-Jacobinism would have been out of business had it confined itself to warning of the danger of Robespierre and Rousseau, but could still just about keep trading if it targeted a more insidious and indigenous Jacobin menace.

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<sup>4</sup> The particular 'parrots' of whom Bisset speaks are later identified, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly (and despite the fact that in his preface Bisset had promised to attack 'VICE AND FOLLY IN GENERAL; and not the vice and folly of any individual person'), as Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin and Charlotte Smith (or Tom Croft, Mr Subtlewould and Charlotte Self-Praise, as they appear in *Douglas*, though the latter becomes Mrs Egoist in *Modern Literature*), as well as Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays and Mary Robinson, amongst many others, in *Modern Literature* (who feature as Jemima, 'Mary', and Mrs Sonnet).



Robert Bisset, *Modern Literature. A Novel*. 3 vols., Longman & Rees, London, 1804

In *Modern Literature* Bisset simply reproduced the same formula he had successfully employed in *Douglas*, using an almost identical plot as the flimsy framework for an investigation into the extent and danger of Jacobinism in Britain. William Hamilton, our hero, is excluded from his rightful place at the head of the social order by the caprice of the Laird of Etterick who has been duped by the designing Sourkrout family. Before William is reinstated in his hereditary rights at the end of the novel, therefore, he has the opportunity to travel Britain and his encounters with egocentric politicians, irresponsible educationalists, penurious authors and roguish new philosophers, amongst many others, provide Bisset with plenty of ammunition for his increasingly apprehensive anti-Jacobin animadversions. We meet, in one form or another, Paine, Priestley, Godwin, Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays; Rousseau, Voltaire, Locke and Thomas Reid; Burke, Pitt, Fox, Dundas, Sheridan and Samuel Horsley; and a whole host of contemporary novelists, referred to pseudonymously, whom Bisset identifies as the lieutenants of Godwin and Wollstonecraft. The best of Bisset's pseudo-Jacobin composite villains is Roger O'Rourke, a Methodist-cum-Catholic dancing-master who doubles as a part-time insurgent and associate of the United Irishmen, and fitfully enters the narrative (I, 120 and II, 231-34).

[Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges], *Mary de Clifford. A Story. Interspersed with Many Poems*. 1 vol., H. D. Symonds, London, 1792<sup>5</sup>

Brydges belongs to a group of novelists, all writing during the zenith of literary anti-Jacobinism around the turn of the century, whose conservative commitment cannot be questioned, but who either did not see, or refused to succumb to, the advantages of incorporating their conservatism into existing and propitiating fictional forms. Brydges did use the novel form and endowed his opinions with reasonably attractive characters to present them, and this in itself represents some sort of concession to a perceived need to get his ideas across to a wide audience, but, in addition to having the alienating tendency to affix excessively miserable endings to his narratives, he remains the only anti-Jacobin author since Edward Sayer to fill pages of his 'fiction' with closely reasoned rebuttals of levelling, new philosophy, and a great deal else too.

As Brydges was the first to admit, his novels were essentially a 'recital of his own complaints ... with a mixture of lamentation, apology, and ... defiance', and there are even occasions when he evinces a sort of tacit apology for the long speeches to which his heroes were given, pronouncing himself to be amazed that their declamations were not more tedious, as if he had no control over the rhetorical tendencies of his characters (*Arthur Fitz-Albini*, II, 20).

Although Brydges, the very incarnation of the reactionary impulse of many Britons when faced with Revolution and radicalism, complains about many aspects of modern society, there is one theme which dominates the three novels he wrote during the era of the Revolution crisis. What we are shown repeatedly is that aristocracy is not valued as it should be in the world which Brydges and his dream-self heroes inhabit, and worse, that the power is society is increasingly shifting to 'new men' with their 'new wealth', a process which must lead both to the extermination of all those virtues and values, and all that virtuosity, which aristocracy keeps alive, and also to the certain triumph of democracy. As quickly becomes apparent, these fears were evidently a deeply-felt, but ultimately personal, concern of Brydges, for he clearly thinks of himself as living, like his heroes, through times unfitted to his character. His biography is certainly useful in understanding this obsession - Brydges had been born into a landed family but spent much of his adult life poor and laying claim to the defunct Barony of Chandos - but it need not concern us here, even though it did lead Brydges into an unexpected enmity for Pitt whom he accused of neglecting to secure the interests of the nobility.

His fear that democracy must be the outcome of allowing the nobility to founder is much more than merely personal, however, and locates Brydges work firmly within the nexus of the public-spirited

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<sup>5</sup> For biographical and critical material on Brydges see Mary Katherine Woodworth, *The Literary Career of Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges* [Oxford, 1935] and Brydges' own *Autobiography, Times, Opinions, and Contemporaries of Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges* [London, 1834], as well as brief treatments in Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.327-38 and Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* [London, 1989], pp.295-96.



anti-Jacobinism determined to save the nation from all the many threats which seemed to assail it in the late '90s and early 1800s. Brydges saw élite corruption and the power of the bourgeoisie as the central threats to Britain's security and prosperity, but like all anti-Jacobins he still thought of the imminent danger to Britain as being from Jacobins, British or French, and weakness of the aristocracy as the breach in the defences through which this enemy would be able to effect an entrance. This was a position that Brydges had not yet fully adopted in *Mary de Clifford*, however, a novel set in 1790 but concentrating its fire purely on the *nouveau riche* Sir Peter Lumm, who pesters the beautiful Mary even though she quite clearly loves the impoverished aristocrat Woodvile [*sic*]. When Sir Peter kills Woodvile in a duel he flees to France and leaves all the other major characters to die or run mad themselves. The maudlin ending is meant to represent Brydges' despondency at the state of the nation. Just as has happened in private life, Brydges insists, so the Sir Peters will drive out the Woodviles in public life too, and the nation will become vulnerable. Vulnerable to what, Brydges does not specify in *Mary de Clifford*, but he was not slow in his later novels to hint that there were Jacobins poised to profit from Britain's foolish disregard for aristocracy.

**[Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges], *Arthur Fitz-Albini, a Novel*. 2 vols., J. White, London, 1798**

Brydges' second novel indicates its increased anti-Jacobinism by even more admiring references to Burke than had appeared in *Mary de Clifford*. Indeed, the novel can be read as a sort of dramatisation of Burkean political philosophy, Brydges reproducing literally Burke's metaphors. For instance, whilst Burke had dreaded that radicals in Britain and France were ignoring the entailments wisely placed on their constitution, Brydges forces his hero, Fitz-Albini, to choose between selling the estate he has inherited (the ancient seat of his ancestors, replete, of course, with 'old hereditary trees' and happy tenants in neat cottages) - which is a course of action which his father's will expressly discouraged him from taking - or marrying his lover, Jane St. Leger, which he may only do with the money the sale of Dallington Hall would provide. Needless to say, Fitz-Albini, having seemed to hear his father's voice telling him of the absolute necessity of preserving intact his inheritance, and putting duty above desire, clings to his birthright, just as Burke had advocated. It makes little difference ultimately, for having briefly inherited the fortune that would both save the estate and allow them to marry, both Fitz-Albini and Jane die of shock ending his aristocratic line in any case (2nd edn., 1799: I, 30-31; II, 30-31, 131-32, 146, 149). Brydges' despondent fatalism had evidently gone into overdrive, but, again, the melancholy ending was presented as the corollary of the sad state of affairs which Fitz-Albini had found on his tour of Britain's corrupt political and cultural institutions which had made up the body of the novel.

**[Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges], *Le Forester, A Novel*. By the Author of *Arthur Fitz-Albini*. 3 vols., J. White, London, 1802**

*Le Forester* is a little more cheerful than Brydges' earlier novels, for Godfrey Le Forester is, after a long history of persecution and wretchedness, eventually allowed to marry Emily and to win back his ancestral estate from her usurping father. This having happened, Brydges assures us with a rare optimism, Le Forester - natural aristocrat that he is - will have 'full room for the display of those vigorous and commanding abilities' which will cheer 'every cottager in these extensive dominions' (III, 220-21). As well as ending much more happily than his other novels, *Le Forester* is also a good deal more politicised. A leveller who is all for equality makes his appearance to be roundly condemned, just as if this was a more conventional anti-Jacobin novel, and Brydges even goes so far as openly to recommend not merely Burke, but Barruel's *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* and specific prints and poems from the *Anti-Jacobin Review* as well (II, 23, 209n).

[Mary Anne Burges], *The Progress of the Pilgrim Good-Intent, in Jacobinical Times*. 1 vol., John Hatchard, London, 1800<sup>6</sup>

At first Burges' novel strikes a congratulatory note, the preface applauding 'the valour of our fleets and armies' for having 'repelled all open assailants from our shores', and then those who, by different means (presumably in print), have combatted 'the machinations of those secret and more dangerous enemies, who have sought to undermine our religion', the happy result being that, by 1800, 'we still retain unshaken the Church and the Constitution, transmitted to us by the wisdom of our ancestors.' Let it be Britain's boast, Burges continues, 'that, in this land, no foe to our holy faith has questioned the authority of any of her doctrines, which some champion of superior strength has not arisen to defend; that, among us, the weight of talents is thrown into the scale of truth' (vi). This is self-congratulation then, but Burges soon makes clear it is no grounds for complacency. It remains, she goes on, 'the duty of every man, who is sensible of the importance of those religious and political truths, which united form the great palladium of our state, to exert his utmost efforts in resisting the attacks, and exposing the wiles, of our arch-enemy, PHILOSOPHISM' (vii). And it is in this context, of course, that her novel should be considered, for evident in every sentence is the same vehement didacticism that had informed the model for the novel, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

In fact, Burges sticks very close to Bunyan's plan, merely updating his satisfyingly blatant allegorical characters and topography for her more pressing cause. So, for instance, Good-Intent arrives quite quickly at the House of the Interpreter, by whom Bunyan's Pilgrim had been entertained and enlightened, but finds that a new house now stands opposite it, that of MR PHILOSOPHY. Good-Intent's travelling companions - MR CREDULITY, LORD LOVE-CHANGE, MR DISCONTENT, and others - persuade him to enter the new house first, and there Messrs. FALSE-REASONING, FREE-THOUGHT and PLAUSIBLE, and eventually MR PHILOSOPHY himself, show him their discoveries - the elixir of Human Perfectibility, as discovered by one of MR PHILOSOPHY'S favourite scholars, is one - and reveal to him, through elaborate visions, why it is they think as they do. In one vision, for example, Good-Intent sees SOCIAL-ORDER distributing fine clothes and crowns to some men, and rags, spades and pick-axes to others, whom he commands to dig for precious ore in order to satisfy those in fine clothes, who stand around idly. It is hardly surprising, explains PHILOSOPHY, that these unjustly used men should wish to see an end to the reign of the GIANT DESPOTISM, who orders the world thus, or that they welcome the arrival of LIBERTY, 'a woman gorgeously attired with a red cap on her head', who lays waste the Giant's castle with one blow of the lamp-post she carries. And indeed, when a figure whose clothes are made all of paper on which is written the words *Rights of Man* holds his mirror up to each of Good-Intent's companions, and they see their own image but laden down with chains, they too adopt PHILOSOPHY'S opinions, forget their pilgrimage and, on PHILOSOPHY'S advice, prostrate themselves before the figures of ANARCHY and ATHEISM to whom they make the sacrifice of the prayer-books given them to them at the outset of their journey (30-34, 43-44).

Fortunately, though, Good-Intent manages to escape and is able to make his way to the Interpreter's house where he is shown the reality of what PHILOSOPHY'S tableaux had distorted. SOCIAL-ORDER had in fact imposed some necessary harmony on a tribe of savages, and LIBERTY had not only destroyed the Bastille of the GIANT DESPOTISM, but the fruitfulness of the fields too, and where the Giant's tower had once stood there was now an almost bottomless lake of blood. Before continuing on his pilgrimage, Good-Intent watches as hordes of lost souls, including his quondam companions, but led by the dangerous-looking BLOOD-MEN, sally out of PHILOSOPHY'S house and attempt to storm 'the mountain of *Revolution*', though it is guarded by the forces of LAWFUL-GOVERNMENT and CHURCH-ESTABLISHMENT and is itself a mass of treacherous bogs and dangerous precipices, continually giving way underfoot. Though they eventually conquer the mountain, none of Good-Intent's friends find it possible to make the descent into the 'Valley of *Equality*' on the other side, and in any case, by that time, the whole endeavour had been sabotaged by the BLOOD-MEN, selfish and malevolent individuals going by such names as RAPINE and PERFIDY, and whose leader, of course, is JACOBINISM. They had, we find,

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<sup>6</sup> The attribution to Burges is from the 1822 edition of the novel in which her brother, Sir James Bland, discloses her authorship and includes a biographical sketch. That Burges' work has escaped the attention of those who have surveyed anti-Jacobin fiction is all the more surprising since the novel went through three editions in 1800 alone, with four more in 1801 and two, the ninth and tenth, appearing in 1822 (plus three Dublin editions and three in America by 1802).

merely used MR PHILOSOPHY for their own nefarious purposes (67-71, 85-86, 141-42). As for Good-Intent, he eventually makes it to the CELESTIAL CITY, but not before he has passed through the town of Vanity, now taken over by the BLOOD-MEN, and helped to defend the one street that still resists their onslaught, *Britain-Row*. Though it remains secure from their attack, our narrator is saddened to see 'that even in *Britain-Row* there were some who had privately entered into correspondence with MR PHILOSOPHY ... and who waited only for a fit opportunity to betray their comrades unto JACOBINISM'. They perhaps are past saving, but Burges has insisted throughout that it is the well-intentioned, like Good-Intent, who fill the ranks of Jacobinism and enable revolution by their own credulity and petty vice. And it is to the well-intentioned Britons to whom Burges speaks, urging them to 'apply themselves more heartily than they ever hitherto have done to root out all iniquity from among them', and thus finally spelling out the *raison d'être* of a novel in which, from the first, she has congratulated Britain on its steadfastness, but warned it of its persisting danger (163, 167-68).

**Frances Burney, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*. 5 vols., Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, London, 1814; rpt., eds. Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L. Mack, and Peter Sabor, with an introduction by Margaret Anne Doody, Oxford, 1991<sup>7</sup>**

Reading *The Wanderer* now, especially in comparison with the militantly conservative fictions of the years around 1800, tends to confirm Burney's own view of the novel - that she had managed it so as to 'excite no rival sentiments, nor awaken any party spirit' (6). The reviewer for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, however, had no hesitation in pronouncing it clearly conservative in intent, averring that one of its protagonists, Elinor Joddrel, 'a genuine Republican and Free-thinker, completely released from all her prejudices', is presented by the author 'exhibited in every light which is calculated to excite abhorrence from those doctrines that, the French themselves blush to remember, once rendered their nation infamous in the eyes of all dispassionate observers.' It is not so much the reviewer's characterisation of Elinor as a Jacobin in the mould of Wollstonecraft or Hays that is questionable, for this is certainly the case, but the notion that Burney had deliberately set out to vilify her character is much more dubious. Yet even if this individual critic was deluding him or herself, in those reviews which do recognise Burney's ideological ambivalence (and both the *British Critic* and the *Quarterly Review* mildly reprimand the author for just this reason) there is never any doubt exhibited as to the genre into which the novel fits, as is made quite explicit by the *British Critic's* declaration that 'were we to recommend a portrait of a female revolutionist, we should certainly advise them [female readers] to seek it in the chaste and animated pages of [Hamilton's] *Modern Philosophers*' - in other words another (and much safer) anti-Jacobin novel. Moreover, the *Gentleman's Magazine's* reviewer certainly believed that the periodical's readers would also be anticipating, and even demanding, anti-Jacobin fiction in general, as well as certain specific techniques of such novels: 'The reader will expect, in consequence of this infatuation' - of Elinor for radical doctrines - 'much extravagance of speeches and conduct of Miss Joddrel, nor will he be disappointed, or displeased to find the Authoress leaves room to suppose she returns to the good old maxims from which she had been perverted' - the most approved and conventional closing of the anti-Jacobin novel.<sup>8</sup>

What we find, then, is that, on the one hand, Burney clearly did not think she was writing a political novel (despite the fact that the very first line of *The Wanderer* abrogates any attempt at ideological neutrality: 'During the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre,' it begins, and from then on never lets up on its understanding of the Revolution as an event of, as Burney's preface has it, 'stupendous iniquity and cruelty', 6). Indeed, her avowed 'native opinion' was that politics 'were not a feminine subject

<sup>7</sup> The best studies of *The Wanderer* is in Margaret Anne Doody's *Frances Burney. The Life in the Works* [New Brunswick, N.J., 1988], pp.313-68. Other critical works pay little attention to the political side of the novel, but see Rose-Marie Cutting, 'A Wreath for Fanny Burney's Last Novel: *The Wanderer's* Contribution to Women's Studies', *Illinois Quarterly*, 37 (1975), 45-64, and Katharine M. Rogers, 'Fanny Burney: The Private Self and the Public Self', *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 7 (1984), 110-17.

<sup>8</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 84 (1814), 579, my emphasis; *British Critic*, n.s., 1 (1814), 385-86; *Quarterly Review*, 11 (1814), 129. For a summary of the conflicting understandings of the political alignment of *The Wanderer* see Doody, *Frances Burney*, pp.331-35.

for discussion'.<sup>9</sup> And yet, on the other hand, reviewers and readers were so conditioned to expect the anti-Jacobin that, as late as 1814, they convinced themselves that they detected it where it was not necessarily present, or at least not unambiguously so, and, indeed, went so far as to reproach Burney for not reaching standards of anti-Jacobinism which, unlike Hamilton in 1800, she had never attempted to achieve. Importantly then, her novel was anti-Jacobin not because it was designed as such - whether it was or not - but because it was judged to be so. Anti-Jacobinism had so thoroughly permeated fiction that Burney was using its techniques by default.

[Mary Charlton], *The Parisian; or, Genuine Anecdotes of Distinguished and Noble Characters*. 2 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1794<sup>10</sup>

*The Parisian* follows *Lindor and Adelaïde* in its use of a Revolutionary setting, but, like the anonymous *Siege of Belgrade* and indeed Charlotte Smith's *Desmond*, the abuses of the French *ancien régime* are portrayed as copious and abominable enough to justify drastic remedial measures, perhaps notwithstanding even violent insurrection. The difference between *The Parisian* and an overtly radical production such as *Desmond*, however, is that Charlton is careful to explain that the end cannot justify the means when the method of emendation is revolution. In *The Siege of Belgrade* it was Leinster's reports of the atrocities taking place in Paris which were so vital a counterpart to his campaign to end the abuses of Czarskaskoi, and in *The Parisian* the villainy of the aristocratic Comte D'Ogimond is complemented by extensive scenes of mob violence in Paris and Normandy in late 1792 and early 1793 which serve to temper criticism of the *ancien régime* with unequivocal denunciation of the act of rebellion. Thus, when Charlton writes of the mob's assault on her heroine, a woman not unreminiscent of Burke's Marie Antoinette, telling us that '[h]er beauty and extreme youth moved a few to tears who were near her, to something resembling compassion, or her death would have been instantaneous', but that 'some of the mob insisted on the instant execution of their vengeance', it would take a philosophical reader indeed to continue to endorse revolution as a solution to the abuses of the *ancien régime* (II, 50-51, 60, 140-42).

[Helen Craik], *Adelaïde de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet. A Tale*. 4 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1800<sup>11</sup>

Probably the most impressive of those novels which commandeered the French Revolution for both polemical and literary purposes was *Adelaïde de Narbonne*. Both Charlotte Cordet [*sic*] and Jean-Paul Marat feature in prominent rôles in the novel (set in 1792-93), the tale ending with the assassination of the one by the other, and Craik uses Charlotte as the medium through which the reader is coaxed into a better, that is to say more disparaging, understanding of the Revolution. What is striking given the general tenor of contemporary British representations of Charlotte Corday is that, rather than portraying her as an out-and-out counter-Revolutionary heroine, Craik elected to depict her squarely as a supporter of a Revolution

<sup>9</sup> Burney's opinion that politics was not a fit subject for a woman writer came in 1796 in response to Princess Sophia's lament that modern writers were 'all turned democrats'. To this Burney replied that she herself had toyed with the idea of introducing her own (conservative) political opinions into her fiction, but had decided not to. Burney also declined contributing to a proposed anti-Jacobin periodical in 1797, although Doody considers this to be a reaction to the too vehement conservatism of her father. Letter to Dr. Burney [for 6 July 1796], *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay)* [12 vols., Oxford, 1972-84], ed. Joyce Hemlow *et al.*, III, 185-86 and 277-78. Doody, *Frances Burney*, p.205.

<sup>10</sup> *The Parisian* is attributed to Charlton in a catalogue of the Minerva Literary Repository (reprinted in Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press 1790-1820* [London, 1939 (for 1935)], p.312). This makes it the first of Charlton's many novels.

<sup>11</sup> For the attribution of this novel to Craik, see Blakey, *Minerva Press*, p.192, who cites the Minerva Library Catalogue of 1814. Allene Gregory briefly considers it in *The French Revolution and the English Novel* [New York, 1915], pp.183-84, oddly filing it under the heading 'Revolutionists and Radicals of Various Degrees' though acknowledging Craik's conservatism.



who had only gradually recanted and converted.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Charlotte's Girondinism is emphasised from the outset, a ploy designed, as is always obvious, to deepen by the contrast the ignominy into which we find the Revolution had descended after about 1792:

Charlotte was a republican, but a rational one; she wished for reforms in a Government which even the most sanguine advocate for monarchy cannot deny wanted them; but she wished not for reforms that were only to serve as a cloak for partial and additional abuses, for actions whose atrocity disgraced human nature, and threw a stain on the French character, which ages to come would be unable to obliterate, or do away. (I, 31)

Intriguingly, although Charlotte ostensibly retracts her support for the Revolution when she sees the streets of Paris deluged in blood and realises that a new 'deadly despotism' has replaced the old, her recantation is located well before the Terror (though after the September Massacres). It is instead quite clearly the events of November 1792, that is to say the Battle of Jermappes, which makes Charlotte 'blush for the cause my heart once so warmly espoused'. This was, of course, the moment when, to the surprise of many, the Revolution proved itself able to survive against the armies of European conservatism, and even able to export itself - a clue which lays bare Craik's fundamentally British view of the Revolution (I, 69).

But in Craik's novel, Charlotte is also influenced by the company she keeps. Adelaide, the pivotal figure of the fiction, is a quiet but determined royalist whose first husband was killed by Marat, mainly so that he might better be able to force her to marry him. In order to avoid his attentions, she has found it necessary to wed her loathsome second husband, a Jacobin himself who gathers a circle of 'Democrats of every description' around him, including Charlotte. Adelaide soon takes her under her wing once she finds that Charlotte really has the best interests of her country at heart 'though a Republican in some of [her] opinions' (I, 24, 159-60). Adelaide distracts herself from her wretchedness by running a sanctuary for fleeing royalists in the Rock of Narbonne, a series of caverns, regarded as haunted by the local people, which, for generations, her family has administered in order to help the victims of France's frequent political vicissitudes. She, and Charlotte, also have occasional run-ins with the Chouans, for this is the Vendée and the forces of the counter-Revolution are at their height, and it is with some inevitability that their leader, Henry St. Julian, is discovered to be Adelaide's long-lost son. When Marat, and, rather oddly, *his* son, turn up in the Vendée to take a personal interest in the suppression of Chouannerie and to increase the misery of Adelaide, Charlotte, wrongly informed that Marat has killed Adelaide and Henry, forgets that 'the executive part of justice is not permitted to the injured individual' and murders him. Happily, this leaves Henry free to marry Victorine of Austria, a relative of Marie-Antoinette and the last hope of the royalists, and to flee, with the rest of Adelaide's coterie, towards 'the chalky cliffs of Albion' (IV, 279, 290).

Clearly, Craik has taken a few liberties with the historical reality here, an impression which even the footnotes which cite her sources (and record that at least one of the episodes she describes was 'a real event') cannot dispel. Naturally, no propagandist worth her salt would have been shy of adding a little colour to history, but the embellishment Craik does indulge in, though it surely does enhance the polemical effect of her novel, seems designed primarily for literary purposes. When Charlotte cries 'Adelaide de Narbonne' as she plunges the dagger into Marat's breast, the principal effect is to unify the various strands of the fiction, and only then to involve the Jacobins in greater opprobrium as the persecutors of an innocent heroine (I, 46, 86, 164n; IV, 280). Indeed, depicting the gravest of Marat's crimes as directly attributable to his lust for Adelaide gives the novel life only at the expense of weakening the effect of the political attack on the Jacobins, for it makes lust the crime, not Jacobinism itself. This should not be surprising either, for by 1800, Craik must have known that she was writing for an audience which was, almost without exception, already converted, and she surely cannot have seen her rôle as truly didactic. This is why the reader is left with the strong impression that Craik was not writing so as to take her place in the front line of a propaganda campaign, but was seeking to make literary, and doubtless monetary, capital out of her subject matter. However, it was only because the Revolution was, by 1800, a cut and dried and pre-comprehended entity that Craik could employ it so casually as the solid framework for her fiction.

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the apotheosis in Britain of Corday into an 'angel of assassination' see Claudine Mitchell, 'Spectacular fears and popular arts: a view from the nineteenth century' in Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest (eds.), *Reflections of Revolution. Images of Romanticism* [London, 1993], pp.159-81.

**John William Cunningham** *A World Without Souls*. 1 vol., J. Hatchard, London, 1805

A primarily Evangelical novel, *A World Without Souls* still exhibits an anti-Jacobin residue, emphasising that moral reform is necessary and urgent if the French menace is to be overcome. By 1805, however, that threat was personified by Napoleon ('One of those fiery spirits, which Heaven lets loose to scourge mankind') rather than being comprehended as the more ideologically dangerous Jacobinism. However, having dedicated the body of the work to assailing the irreligion all too prevalent in the land of 'O' (that is to say Britain), Cunningham does end the novel by lambasting France for invading peaceful Switzerland and by eulogising his hero for teaching the invaders 'that the best Christian is ever the best Patriot' (1806 edn.: 175-76).

**[Charlotte Dacre],** *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer. A Tale*. By Rosa Matilda. 3 vols., J. F. Hughes, London, 1805<sup>13</sup>

Dacre's novel places an ingenuous heroine, Cazire, between two seducers, one a run-of-the-mill libertine and the other a new philosopher of the most conventional kind, continually parroting Godwinian phrases and attempting to effect the corruption of Cazire by reason. This certainly makes a clear and familiar anti-Jacobin point - that the new philosophy of Fribourg is merely the licentiousness of Lindorf rationalised - but ultimately Dacre's decision not to distinguish further between Fribourg's and Lindorf's iniquity (and in the end, Cazire falls prey to both of them) is symptomatic of her wish to attack only vice in general, not specifically Jacobinism, and, above all, to provide an engaging tale of a woman seduced, succumbing and contrite. Throughout, Fribourg has had no discernably Jacobin intent, only the wish to debauch Cazire, and indeed, by the novel's close, he has been utterly transformed from vicious new philosopher into tragic hero: 'Your love was the height to which my soul aspired,' he says, 'I saw, too late, I had mistaken the path of happiness. I followed the delusive shade through mazes of destruction' (III, 182).

**[Charlotte Dacre],** *The Passions*. By Rosa Matilda. 4 vols., Cadell & Davies, London, 1811

In this, Dacre's final novel, the same use of anti-Jacobin rhetoric for decidedly non-political purposes as had been observable in her *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* is once more evident. The villain, Lady Appollonia Zulmer, uses clearly new philosophical books and vocabulary to seduce the innocent heroine, Julia, away from her husband. Rousseau is the chief weapon in her armoury; Voltaire, Diderot, Helvetius and Goethe also prove serviceable; but Lady Appollonia also attempts to incite in Julia several manifestly Wollstonecraftian grievances. The results of this poison are unequivocal. Julia deserts her husband and begins a relationship with the married Darlowitz. His wife and child die miserably. Julia runs mad, and later dies repentant. All Lady Appollonia's schemes have succeeded, although Dacre still has time to ensure she falls victim to her designing servant, and so we are shown that new philosophy has wrought ruin wherever it has spread. Yet, throughout, the novel manifests no other anti-Jacobin characteristics and Dacre makes no attempt to relate her tale to the political situation in Europe.

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<sup>13</sup> For a substantial summary of the *Zofloya; or, The Moor* (1806), one of Dacre's other works, see Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, pp.105-109. For Dacre's work in general see Ann H. Jones, *Ideas and Innovations. Best Sellers of Jane Austen's Age* [New York, 1986], ch.8. Dacre was born in 1782-83 (although Jones suggests 1772-73) which would mean, if we take seriously Dacre's claim to have written the novel when she was sixteen, that *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* was finished as early as 1798-99.

Robert Charles Dallas, *Percival, or Nature Vindicated. A Novel*. 4 vols., Longman and Rees, London, 1801<sup>14</sup>

*Percival* is a curious work, undeniably anti-Jacobin in many ways with its full complement of aristocratic new philosophers whose foolish opinions on the French Revolution are easily ridiculed, and with much discussion on the subject of hierarchy and rank, but exhibiting little of the intense commitment evident in the work of other conservative novelists. Certainly it is not as zealous as might have been expected given Dallas' own estimation of it in the preface to his collected works as an original, determined and premeditated contribution to the defence against what he called 'that monster ... Jacobinism and confusion'. Moreover, this retrospective evaluation of the novel is illuminating when juxtaposed with the aims Dallas set out for his novel in its own preface twelve years earlier. There the reader had been told that the novel would have succeeded in its aim if it had been able 'to fortify the mind of any female against the attacks of seduction' or 'to make the seducer look with horror into his bosom'. The implication of these two views of the purpose of *Percival* suggests quite clearly that Dallas, like D'Israeli in 'The Daughter', thought the defence of female chastity a sure way to guard against Jacobinism. Indeed, his earlier preface spells this out rather epigrammatically: 'Revolutions in Morals lead to Revolutions in States' - a demonstration that the strict enforcement of gender propriety was never only a convenient symbol of social and political rectitude especially well suited to fiction and its well-established preoccupation with female sexual decorum, but was widely held actually to be a valid and vital form of anti-Jacobinism in itself (*Works*: I, xiv-xvi; *Percival*: I, xiii and ix).

The preface to Dallas' collected works also reveals that the character of Miss Emma Coverley was based on real life, although, Dallas adds, in his novel he has given the tale a 'favourable turn', allowing Emma - unlike Wollstonecraft, say, on whom she seems to have been loosely based - suddenly to reform. Her 'mistaken ideas of liberty and love' and familiar opinion that 'the restraints of custom were unnatural shackles' cause her protracted misery and form the subject of many of the novel's letters, (*Works*, III, 198, I, xvi). Emma is a wealthy heiress, propelled into decidedly Jacobin opinions (she is described as 'one of the fashionable democrats who were operating a revolution in matrimony') by the haughtiness of her aristocratic circle and what she regards as the ridiculous codes of behaviour enjoined on women by polite society (*Percival*, III, 87,). 'What am I to do,' she asks Edward Percival, our hero and her guardian,

Either I must give up the world, or my own faculties. Am I born to say yes, and no, certainly, and that's right, when my conviction impels me to say no, and yes, I doubt, and that's wrong? Am I to be a slave to what I despise? (*Percival*: I, 201)

Unhappily for Emma, and still rather staggeringly, the answer that Dallas gives is that yes, Emma must comply with society's dicta, remaining silent even if still thinking her dissent. Her irate response is to throw herself into marriage with the Chevalier St. Valeri, a French émigré, a misjudged union which proves to be her penance, and ultimately expedites her reform by teaching her the value of female decorousness. By the end of the novel, Dallas allows her to remarry more happily, re-emphasising the anti-Jacobin context of his treatment of female propriety by having St. Valeri die a convenient, and cautionary, death during Robespierre's Terror which descends forebodingly at the end of the novel like a dark cloud. All this compliments the discussion of equality, rank and the basis of social hierarchies which forms the substance of many of the novel's other letters.

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<sup>14</sup> Only the first three volumes of the original 1801 edition of *Percival* are in the British Library. I have nevertheless quoted from this edition for vols. I-III of the novel, and from *The Miscellaneous Works and Novels of R. C. Dallas, Esq.* [London, 1813] (in which the whole novel is contained in vols. II and III) for vol. IV. Only Harvey, 'George Walker and the Anti-Revolutionary Novel', p.292n.2, makes mention of *Percival* as an anti-Jacobin novel.

[John Davis?], *The Post-Captain; or, the Wooden Walls Well Manned; Comprehending a View of Naval Society and Manners. By the Author of 'Edward;' 'A View of Society in France;' &c..* 1 vol., Thomas Tegg, London, 'third edition', 1808

There is no evidence to suggest that John Moore did write this novel, as the title claims, although its attribution to Davis by both the British Library and Bodleian catalogues is also tenuous. Tegg's 1808 edition claims to be the third but I have found no previous editions recorded, although five more by 1813 testify to the novel's popularity.

Like the anonymous *The Chances*, *The Post-Captain* prides itself on its familiarity with the customs and ordinances of the navy, and the narrative is skilfully woven around a convincing, if sanitised, picture of life aboard ship during the Revolutionary wars (c.1800-1801), ultimately using prize money to enable the marriage of its protagonists. There is, of course, much anti-Gallicanism evident, and much is made of the bravery of all the Jack Tars who fill the navy, but no ideologically anti-Jacobin sentiments feature.

[Isaac D'Israeli], *Vaurien: or, Sketches of the Times: Exhibiting Views of the Philosophies, Religions, Politics, Literature, and Manners of the Age.* 2 vols., Cadell & Davies, London, 1797<sup>15</sup>

As Pye had done in his *Democrat*, D'Israeli centred his novel on the career of a French agent sent to incite rebellion in Britain, but by 1797 this character had been more thoroughly integrated into the novel's plot. So, despite disingenuously claiming to have used only the 'form rather than the matter of a novel' (I, xvi), D'Israeli presents Vaurien attempting to seduce the beautiful and friendless Emily, destined to become the wife of our hero, Charles, and he consequently relegates to certain separate sections Vaurien's quest to discover Britain's weaknesses (where bombs could best be planted and riots most advantageously started, say, or how the decadence of the aristocracy could best be turned to his advantage) and to organise the discontented of Britain (Platonists and Jews, as well as a society of would-be insurrectionists) into a real revolutionary force. Ultimately, as in *The Democrat*, Vaurien too finds that the British are fundamentally loyal and patriotic, and is also expelled from the country (by Henry Dundas personally, no less), leaving Britain safe and free.

Vaurien himself had equated the two fronts of his campaign of villainy, the public and the private, implying that he considered his rakish ambitions as a form of insurgency by claiming (when he failed to seduce Emily) that 'it is only national treasons which I feel as my genius', and we see him apply the same skills to both his attempts at sedition and seduction (eliciting that Emily's father is blind, say, with the same acumen he had applied to his arson-minded tour of St. Paul's Cathedral). Vaurien even plans to entice the British people into Revolution by introducing French-style ceremonies 'invented to captivate the eye' and 'to please the fancies of women' (namely honouring Newton as the French had idolised Rousseau and Voltaire). Inevitably we begin to understand that, for D'Israeli, Britain's safety is analogous to his heroine's chastity, with the Revolutionaries from France and their British counterparts as would-be violators (I, 247, 218; II, 318, 280).

Vaurien, the French agent, was not the only menace to society denounced by D'Israeli. Though the Platonist, the Jew, the Dissenter and the unpreferred clergyman had all exhibited their residual patriotism when approached by Vaurien, the band of new philosophers he had encountered, all British born and bred, outdid him in their militancy, and in their folly. Mr Subtile, Mr Reverberator, Dr Bounce, Mr Rant and Mr Dragon are meant to represent a cogent threat, for whilst Vaurien had been a literary personification of the Spirit of Revolution as it were, these 'new philosophers' were real, genuinely threatening figures whom D'Israeli was anxious to have recognisable as specific living individuals. Certainly, Henry Crabb Robinson, ignoring the Vaurien character, understood the book as a 'libellous Invective on the Leaders of the Democratick and Philosophick Party', and told how Thomas Holcroft, himself probably represented by Mr Reverberator (who repeats everything said by his more learned comrades), had thought Mr Subtile to be a 'good Painting' of Godwin. The other new philosophers may be less certainly identified - Rant is probably John Thelwall and Bounce may be Price, Priestly, Parr or

<sup>15</sup> James Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli* [Oxford, 1969] remains the standard work, but is more biographical than critical.



Joseph Fawcett - and there is little to be gained by speculating further, but the essential point to be elicited from D'Israeli's cast of home-grown rogues is that they had eclipsed the foreign Vaurien figure, the principal danger for D'Israeli, writing in 1797, coming not from France, but from the enemy within. It was a theme that would soon be picked up by Elizabeth Hamilton and many others.<sup>16</sup>

**Isaac D'Israeli, 'The Daughter; or, A Modern Romance' in *Romances. To which is now added, 'A Modern Romance'*. 1 vol., Murray and Highley, London, 2nd edn., 1801, pp.213-30**

Whilst many novelists regarded the commandeering of conventional seduction plots for anti-Jacobin purposes and the presentation of Jacobinism as concomitant with libertinism as useful strategies for propitiating a readership brought up on such stuff and for enlivening what might otherwise be dull political fiction, this conjunction was also very much an ideological conviction in itself. Certainly, this was something that Isaac D'Israeli, returning to his anti-Jacobin strain for the first time since *Vaurien*, was keen to evince in the 'Advertisement' to 'The Daughter', a short tale that he added to his *Romances* (1799) for its second edition (1801). Having argued that 'The violation of the marriage state' would necessarily precipitate the collapse of society ('since it takes away from the Female that assurance her chastity gives to the World, of her submission to the regulations of the social order, and of her existence as a domestic character'), he went on to accuse the new philosophers of, perhaps unwittingly, being in danger of achieving just this:

Let this reply to those indifferent philosophers who aim at the annihilation of certain salutary notions which they call *popular prejudices*; but who are for replacing these, by *their own prejudices* more inveterate, and more dangerous; and whose *Experiments on Society*, if they are suffered to proceed, promise to introduce a barbarism, more to be dreaded than that of the rudest society; for it would have all its irregularities, without its ignorance. (213)

The rest of the tale though, despite the fact that D'Israeli's biographer has called it 'an interesting defence of traditional morality against the attacks of the Godwinians', never adopts a consistent anti-Jacobin line but rather seems a defence of traditional morality.<sup>17</sup> Clarissa, the eponymous daughter, marries an objectionable nabob on her father's instructions, and soon finds him to be an unfaithful and despicable husband. Melville, Clarissa's true love, presently returns from his travels and their attachment recommences. Personifying D'Israeli's ideal, Clarissa resists the blandishments of the new philosophical notions cited in his preface and dies without having succumbed to the temptations of adultery.

**[Isaac D'Israeli], *Flim-Flams! or, The Life and Errors of My Uncle, and the Amours of my Aunt! With Illustrations and Obscurities, by Messieurs Tag, Rag, and Bobtail. With an Illuminating Index*. 3 vols., John Murray, London, 1805; 2nd edn., expanded, London, 1806**

*Flim-Flams!* is a frivolous and rather glib novel but with many distinctly anti-Jacobin touches. The uncle of the title becomes involved with various 'philos', one of whom is Mr Kill-Joy (Holcroft) and another the new philosopher CACO-NOUS (that is to say Godwin, who features much more extensively in the second edition). D'Israeli's mockery has the character of a pasquinade more than a sustained and committed anti-Jacobin assault, though, and despite the fact that Peter Marshall rather idiosyncratically calls *Flim-Flams!* the best satire of Godwin's opinions and a 'veritable *tour de force*', D'Israeli's own biographer is nearer the mark when he notes that he took the frippery of *Tristram Shandy* for his inspiration. Indeed D'Israeli's decision to concentrate his fire on certain now obscure scientists rather than the new philosophers seems to have resulted in the novel's poor reviews.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson to T. H. Robinson, 18 December 1797, quoted in Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, p.63.

<sup>17</sup> Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, p.56.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, p.232; Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli*, pp.64-66; *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 20 (1805), 371-76.

[Edward Dubois], *St. Godwin: A Tale of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Century*. By Count Reginald De Saint Leon. 1 vol., J. Wright, London, 1800

As its title betrays, *St. Godwin* is a parody of Godwin's novel *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799), although it does not for long hold back from assailing Godwin's other works too. As is usual with parodies, it enters into its satire very good-humouredly, its supposed author (ostensibly Godwin) frequently breaking into his narrative, say, to congratulate himself on his phraseology. Doubtless it is this which has led Marie Roberts to suggest that it is Godwin's pomposity and his desire for public approval which Dubois targets, and not his politics. Yet, as with Brydges Dubois' very individual style should not be allowed to obscure the underlying and clearly motivating anti-Jacobin intent.<sup>19</sup>

Like Godwin's *St. Leon*, Count Reginald discovers the elixir of life, but Dubois' hero uses his eternal youth for purposes decidedly reminiscent of the immorality for which Godwinian new philosophy had been generally indicted. Not only does he desert his wife (who might be meant to be Wollstonecraft, for she dies in childbirth - two years after Reginald deserts her), but he then seduces his own son's lover before dallying with the French king's mistress and being thrown into the Bastille. It is in the Bastille, not insignificantly the symbol of the *ancien régime*, that *St. Godwin* discovers the new philosophy of necessity, which he can then use to justify rationally all his former acts (which until then had been mere vices), but it is upon his release in 1789 that he begins to exhibit the propensity to drag others into his depravity, for which Dubois, however affably, indicts him in the standard anti-Jacobin manner. In France, we are told, *St. Godwin* 'entered warmly into the politics of the day, and studied JACOBINISM', but, worse, it was in Britain that he publicly 'opposed all political and moral order, and endeavoured to overturn every system that time and experience had sanctioned and approved' (211 and 233). Undoubtedly then *St. Godwin* is an anti-Jacobin novel. The question of whether the novel was designed as propaganda or simply written as a *jeu d'esprit* remains secondary.

Maria Edgeworth, 'Madame de Fleury', in *Tales of Fashionable Life*. 3 vols., J. Johnson, London, 1809, pp.177-328

'Madame de Fleury' is set squarely in the midst of the Terror in Paris, and its grisly description of life under Robespierre's regime carries an unequivocal anti-Jacobin lesson in itself, surprisingly undiminished in urgency given that Edgeworth was writing about the events of some sixteen years earlier. Indeed, the narrative is also occasionally interrupted by quite deliberately imported anti-Jacobin sentiments widespread a generation before, but hardly so by 1809.

As one of the few critics to have examined the tale has pointed out, Edgeworth clearly designed the tale - 'essentially a teaching on how to teach' - to promote the precepts of her *Essays on Practical Education* (1798 and 1801), a text which forms the basis of the Parisian school which Madame de Fleury founds.<sup>20</sup> Yet the school educates its pupils not only in the skills which they will need to succeed materially but also into an anti-Jacobin rectitude. And these two aspects of their education frequently intersect, for having been able, by virtue of Madame de Fleury's teaching, to achieve positions of ease and influence, her former pupils are able to resist the temptations of revolution and to intercede to halt the violence of the mob, eventually succeeding in removing Madame de Fleury from the list of émigrées.

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<sup>19</sup> Marie Roberts, *Gothic Immortals. The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* [London, 1990], pp.47-49. Besides this short examination of *St. Godwin*, no other sustained treatment of the novel has, to my knowledge, been attempted.

<sup>20</sup> O. Elizabeth McWhorter Harden, *Maria Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction* [The Hague, 1971], p.184.

[Sarah Green], *The Reformist!!! A Serio-comic political novel*. 2 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1810

*The Reformist!!!*, its preface signed 'S. G\*\*\*\*', attacks first Methodism, and then the campaign for parliamentary reform (as distinct from the Jacobin campaign for a wholesale socio-political revolution). It retains many vestiges of the anti-Jacobin school however. First, both of these quixotic quests are amply demonstrated to be just as absurd and liable to be hijacked by self-interested villains as had been the new philosophical crusades which had featured in so many earlier conservative novels. Second, even in the midst of his Methodist folly, Percival Ellingford, the eponymous quixote, takes time out to expatiate on the probity of monarchical government (a lesson which Green reinforces by presenting the virtuous loyalism of the whole community on the occasion of George III's jubilee in 1809). Furthermore, when he switches his allegiance to political reformers such as Sir Frederic Burrett (clearly meant to represent Sir Francis Burdett), Ellingford is censured for addressing the people 'with all the energy of a staunch democrat' and argues with his servant over the likely results of any attempt at economic levelling, Green having apparently forgotten, or rather deliberately misrepresented, the specific and limited demands of parliamentary reformers such as Burdett (I, 112, 180-81; II, 27 and 143). Ultimately Percival reforms, but too late to marry his childhood sweetheart, although Green does provide her readers with a wedding as the pious Charlotte steps in at the last moment to wed the no-longer would-be reformer.

Elizabeth Hamilton, *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah; Written Previous To, and During the Period of his Residence in England*. 2 vols., G.G. & J. Robinson, London, 1796<sup>21</sup>

Hamilton's were probably the most popular of the anti-Jacobin novels, *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* reaching its fifth edition by 1813 and her *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* going through two editions within the year of its publication (or three including the customary Dublin edition) and four by 1804 (or seven including the two Irish and one French versions). *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* was far from conventional, however, being divided rigidly into two halves, the first containing the letters of the eponymous Rajah Zaarmilla as he is informed of various aspects of life in Britain by characters who have been there, and the second containing his own account of his travels within England. In effect, the two volumes are reflections of one another, for in the first, by and large, Zaarmilla is told of the way Britain ought to be, of the perfections of her institutions and the beauty of her religion, whilst in the second, he discovers how these glories have been degraded by the corrupted manners of the people.<sup>22</sup> The folly of Sir Caprice Ardent and his fellow new philosophers (Mr Axiom, Dr Sceptic and Mr Puzzledorf, who, despite the novel's ostensible setting in the late 1770s, are dupes of Locke, Berkley, Price, Priestley and especially Godwin), which fills the last quarter of the novel, was only the most glaring of these perversions. Yet Hamilton interrupts what is essentially a good-humoured picaresque romp with details of the chilling fates that attend the victims of their new philosophy: the dishonour of its female adherents lured into a disregard for their chastity, the death of two young devotees of atheism, and the expected hanging waiting for Dr Sceptic's servant for his too active levelling, even if, in a familiar manner, it has been precipitated by his master's impolitic new philosophical talk (1801 edn.: II, 343, 215-16, 273, 204-205).

<sup>21</sup> For brief treatments of Hamilton's anti-Jacobin work see Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.319-20 and n., Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, pp.108 and 111, Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, p.302, and Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* [Chicago, 1988], 'Introduction' and ch.1. Elizabeth Ogilvie Benger's *Memoirs of the Late Mrs Hamilton, with a Selection from her Correspondence and Other Unpublished Writings* [London, 1818] remains the only major biography, but more sustained treatments have recently appeared in Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Counter-Revolution 1790-1827* [Oxford, 1993], pp.126-61 and 265-304, Ann H. Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, pp.19-48, Eleanor Ty, 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned: Elizabeth Hamilton's Parodic Novel' in *Ariel. A Review of International English Literature*, 21 (1991), 111-29, and Jane Rendall, 'Writing History for British Women: Elizabeth Hamilton and the *Memoirs of Agrippina*', pp.79-93 in Clarissa Campbell (ed.), *Wollstonecraft's Daughters. Womanhood in England and France 1780-1920* [Manchester, 1996].

<sup>22</sup> The prototype of Hamilton's novel may have been one, or all, of Charles-Louis Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721), George Lyttelton's *Letters from a Persian* (1735), or Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762), each of which purported to record the observations and reflections of an Oriental traveller in Europe through the reports he sent back home. It is the first section of *Hindoo Rajah* therefore, in which Zaarmilla comes to understand how British society should be so that he may later comprehend the corruption of this perfection, which represents Hamilton's most significant achievement.

Hamilton chose to enlarge upon the danger of Jacobin philosophy in her second novel too, a fact about which she was not in the least abashed (despite using an elaborate framing device to disavow her authorship) claiming in the novel's preface that like 'some other recent publications,' it had 'avowedly been written in opposition to the opinions generally known by the name of the *New Philosophy*' (2nd edn., 1800: I, xiii).<sup>23</sup> Most commentators agree that *Modern Philosophers* is amongst the most successful of all anti-Jacobin novels, her eulogising early nineteenth century biographer anticipating most of the acclaim that would come later by emphasising the novel's humour - 'Aristocrats and Democrats agreed to laugh at what was ridiculous' - and its potency, recording that one of Hamilton's correspondents apparently detected herself in Bridgetina Botherim, the central character, so that she 'instantly abjured the follies and absurdities which created the resemblance'.<sup>24</sup> In fact, and as many of Hamilton's foot-notes make clear, Bridgetina is a direct pastiche of Mary Hays, whose novel in defence of women's sexual and intellectual autonomy, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, had appeared in 1796. But as was usual, Bridgetina was the dupe of others, a coterie of new philosophers gathered in her village. We are vouchsafed the interesting story of the gradual descent into Jacobinism of Vallaton, their chief, a version of which he repeats to the lovely Julia as part of his strategy for her seduction. It is when he tells her that he is an orphan that Julia's interest in him is awakened for, like Bridgetina, she is a devotee of novels (and novel-reading was generally represented, whether seriously or flippantly, as another form of quixoticism, setting up an artificial code of behaviour which, when transposed to real life, always proved fallacious, and was generally productive of the most grievous results). It is his resemblance to a typical novel's hero (whose principal quality is that he must be rejected by the heroine's parents because of his ostensibly lowly birth), along with her father's failure to instill in her a safeguarding Christianity and Vallaton's own new philosophical promptings, which combine together to overthrow her virtue. By the end of the novel, whilst Bridgetina is allowed to reform, Julia is dead, her deathbed speech providing the novel's moral. If only, like Harriet and Maria - the virtuous characters who have provided a rather drab contrast to Julia and Bridgetina - if only

I had been taught to devote the actions of every day to my GOD; and instead of encouraging a gloomy and querulous discontent against the present order of things, had employed myself in the vigilant performance of the duties of my station, and a scrupulous government of my own heart and inclinations, how very different would my situation now have been! (III, 346)

Nowhere could we have a better illustration of Gary Kelly's observation that anti-Jacobin fiction tended 'to reduce large political and public issues to their domestic, everyday, commonplace consequences in individual domestic experience ..., to translate the political and public issues into private and domestic equivalents', an arrangement that no doubt suited both the reader and the novelist.<sup>25</sup> It need only be added that, for many anti-Jacobin novelists, such a process was not a *reduction*, but a genuine attempt to represent of the reality of radicalism. Jacobinism was not, for many conservatives, a public or political force, something which would alter society as a whole, as the Jacobins themselves were supposed to be hoping. Instead it was a poison that would affect individuals, corrupt and vicious as they already were, destroying their personal peace, as it had done with Julia and Bridgetina.

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<sup>23</sup> The preface is signed 'Geoffrey Jarvis' and tells of how the manuscript was found by him being used as kindling and how he decided, having realised its didactic value, to oversee its publication. The first pages having already been used for starting fires - and Hamilton probably intended this to be understood as a satire of the incendiary ambitions of the very texts she would be deriding - the novel begins, primarily for comic effect, in mid-sentence in chapter five. By the second edition of the novel, also in 1800, Hamilton had admitted her authorship.

<sup>24</sup> Bengier, *Memoirs of the Late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton*, pp.132-33.

<sup>25</sup> Kelly, 'Jane Austen and the English Novel of the 1790s', pp.285-306 in *Fetter'd of Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, eds. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski [Athens, Ohio, 1986], p.290.



Thomas Harral, *Scenes of Life. A Novel*. 3 vols., B. Crosby, London, 1805<sup>26</sup>

Dedicated to his friend John Gifford, editor of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, Harral's novel betrays its conspicuous anti-Jacobinism right from the start. It also emphasises the anachronistic nature of these rather dilatory conservative fictions by railing against a 'spouting-club', that is to say against the sort of radical debating society which had flourished in Britain in the early years of the Revolution before being vanquished by the mid-'90s by the Seditious Meetings Act (1795) and, probably more effectively, by an increasingly hegemonic popular conservatism. When the author laments 'the mischief which these societies, according to their present constitution, have produced and promulgated,' and deplores that they 'are not independent institutions, but are closely connected with others of a more formidable nature; and may indeed be considered as preparatory schools of infidelity, sedition, and treason', he or she is quite clearly either out of touch with the times or deliberately and artificially keeping alive a demon from the '90s for its enduring mobilising value. Even the reviewer in the *British Critic* hoped that these societies were a danger which had, by 1805, abated.

Elizabeth Helme, *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest, a Novel*. 4 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1796<sup>27</sup>

Helme had included two pseudo-new philosophical villains in her tremendously successful novel *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest*, recognisable through their 'infernal sophistry' and their attempts to overcome society's prejudices' by following the dictates of reason and nature, unshackled by the ties of priestcraft' (III, 56). Yet she had exhibited none of the other characteristics of anti-Jacobin fiction and had evinced as little commitment to the conservative cause as many novelists writing ten years later would do (Dacre, Porter), even giving the name William Godwin to the wise, worthy and eponymous farmer, apparently unaware of what this name might signify.

The plot of the novel is nothing if not straightforward. The fashionable Mr Whitmore and Mrs Delmer are deposited at the humble house of Farmer William Godwin after an their carriage is overturned on the road. They take his children, Edwin and Emma, to London with them and initiate them into the ways of vice, using new philosophical language and arguments to effect their corruption. Both Edwin and Emma embark on lengthy careers of depravity before dying in destitution, penitent and leaving edifying memoirs for their children. Probably the most interesting aspect of the novel, besides Helme's astonishing obliviousness of the connotations of the name William Godwin, is an inset story told by Felix, a black slave from the West Indies, which, as well as forwarding the novel's plot, relates his autobiography, including a description of life in Africa and of a slave revolt which he is instrumental in suppressing. The narrative argues not so much against slavery as for the more humane treatment of slaves (II, 181-203, 110-80). In some respects (though not the latter) this episode is reminiscent of *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African* (1789), the first of the great slave narratives and a work establishing something of a vogue in 1790s Britain. It is possible that Helme was deliberately attempting to capitalise on this vogue in her novel.

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<sup>26</sup> I have not been able to find any trace of this novel except its short reviews in the *British Critic*, 26 (1805), 321-22 (from which I take my quotations) and *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 22 (1806), 73. A brief biography of Harral, and summary of his anti-Jacobin extremism, is to be found in Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins, 1798-1800. The Early Contributors to the 'Anti-Jacobin Review'* [Basingstoke, 1988], pp.104-105.

<sup>27</sup> Victor E. Neuburg bears testimony to the enormous popularity of this novel in his *Popular Literature. A History and Guide* [London, 1977], averring that the novel sold more than 75,000 copies (pp.177 and 184). Certainly the novel had gone through seven editions by 1824.

**Sophia King, *Waldorf; or, the Dangers of Philosophy. A Philosophical Tale*. 2 vols., G. G. & J. Robinson, London, 1798<sup>28</sup>**

One of the simplest means of discrediting new philosophy without recourse to a perilous ratiocination was to communicate and comprehend it through the opinions and actions of a rake or coquette. In *Waldorf*, we follow the story of a young foundling, Ferville Waldorf, as he comes under the pernicious influence of Herdi Lok, a seasoned new philosopher, in the Vienna of some unspecified, pre-Revolutionary era. Thereafter, the two 'philosophers', though their enlightened opinions are quickly exposed as nothing but a mask for their carnality, career around Europe, seducing numerous women with their insinuating doctrines, but, like Faust, the Wandering Jew, or Godwin's St. Leon, they are able to find no peace or lasting satisfaction, their scepticism admitting of no comfort. They encounter an anti-Jacobin 'magician', Zenna (Waldorf's father it turns out, but really a sort of *anti*-Mephistopheles who tries to snatch him from the grasp of perdition), some new philosophical banditti, and a number of other marvellously anachronistic pseudo-gothic proponents or adversaries of the Enlightenment, but a series of deaths - of his victims, their families, and innocent peasants accused of crimes that he had committed - causes Waldorf to repent and, at last, to run mad and kill himself. The maudlin conclusion brings Faustus to mind once more, not only because Waldorf was the branch that might have grown full straight, but also, as Lok concludes rather in the manner of late 1790s Godwin, because '[t]o make a man wise, in this state of society, is to destroy his peace' - a confirmation of what King has maintained throughout the novel: that new philosophy is not objectionable in theory, but only, and indisputably, in its effects (II, 217).

**Sophia King, *The Fatal Secret, or, Unknown Warrior; A Romance of the Twelfth Century, with Legendary Poems*. 1 vol., J. G. Bernard 'for the author', London, 1801**

If *Waldorf* had seemed to owe much to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, her next work was even more indebted, albeit that it was mediated through Matthew Lewis' recent treatment of the Faust legend in *The Monk* of 1796. King's preface had made specific reference to Lewis' novel, along with Godwin's own *St. Leon*, arguing that if *they* might be permitted to use the supernatural to add colour to their fiction, she sees no reason why anyone should criticise her for doing the same. Yet in one thing, she is careful to add, she has sought to have her novel differ from theirs, endeavouring to have it 'extenuate by its moral tendency, any little luxuriations of language or idea, which have inadvertently occurred' (vi-vii). What, precisely, 'inadvertently' means in this sentence is not quite clear, for there is no coyness apparent when the Devil himself - King's luxuriance - makes his appearance, throwing off his disguise as Morven, the Black Knight, to reveal himself as the tempter of our protagonist (as he had in *The Monk* and in *Faustus*). But an anti-Jacobinism is just as evident too, for Morven's ultimately successful attempts at the seduction of Altona had been couched in the language of new philosophy. She should ignore her new husband, Morven had goaded, since it is absurd that any woman, 'if her mind is strong, and her faculties not so likely to be prostituted to worldly prejudices as to induce her to suppose herself guilty', should feel herself bound by the chains mankind has invented 'to fetter his happiness' (48, 61). Certainly, when Altona eventually has her husband killed, pushes her sister (who has also been the object of Morven's advances) into the nearby boiling waters of a bottomless chasm [*sic*], and flees to Morven's castle, only to find him to be the Devil, King means us to realise that it is not the entrancing music that Morven has regularly conjured up for her that has won her soul, but his too subtle and destructive arguments.

It is the contrast between *Waldorf* and *The Fatal Secret*, however, which is most arresting. No reader of the former could doubt for a moment its author's intent. Its every episode and speech reveals the novel's anti-Jacobinism, and although a conventional tale of a rake reformed is successfully merged with the political agenda, there is never a point at which the narrative comes to dominate the didacticism entirely. In *The Fatal Secret*, though, the anti-Jacobin rhetoric of Morven is never more than a technique that this moral-sexual predator uses to secure his prey, being pressed into service on a number of

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<sup>28</sup> For a brief treatment of *Waldorf* see Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.325-26. As Tompkins points out, according to the author's own account, King was only sixteen years old when *Waldorf* was published, although there are anecdotal precedents for believing this to be a ploy to gain the sympathy of readers.

occasions but with no suggestion that Morven actually believed a word of it, as both Waldorf and Lok had clearly done. In *Waldorf*, King had used both a new philosopher who sincerely believed in his doctrines (Lok), and a new philosopher who was only attracted to them by their effect (Waldorf), that is to say by the way in which they sanctioned his licentiousness. By *The Fatal Secret*, though, she has done away with Lok and retains only the Waldorf character, having thus rid new philosophy of any cogency as an ideological system and converted it into nothing more than one ploy amongst the rake's many options.

**Charles Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*. 2 vols., Joseph Cottle, Bristol, 1798**

*Edmund Oliver*, although a novel professedly written to disparage the 'spurious progeny' of the Godwinian school, was is a difficult novel to categorise politically. Lloyd was roundly criticised for it by the zealously reactionary Robert Bisset in the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, and the 38-page *Letter to the Anti-Jacobin Reviewers* which Lloyd felt it necessary to publish in an attempt to clear himself from Bisset's charges of a sympathy for levelling and opposition to the army and to war, tends to call into question, rather than to affirm, his loyalism. Somewhat unusually, indeed, the charges made by Bisset and *The Anti-Jacobin* may be easily corroborated. Lloyd fills a whole chapter with what can only be interpreted as a most untimely, not to say mildly traitorous, assault on 'those who sell themselves to slaughter their fellow men' in Britain's wars (against Revolutionary France we must presume), and he includes a carefully-worked attack on any man who attempts to earn or possess more money than may be sufficient to satisfy his immediate needs, or as he puts it more self-incriminatingly, 'than would fall to our share, were property equalised'. Elsewhere, indeed, Lloyd espouses an educational system which can only be described as Rousseauian and introduces a prostitute who tells us, as if Lloyd were using her to illustrate *Political Justice*, that 'I am become the outcast of society, it is true - but society has made me what I am' (I, 179-80, 241-42; II, 32-45, 50-53, 279-81).<sup>29</sup>

Yet the novel's preface had always claimed that it had been written 'with the design of counteracting that generalising spirit which seems so much to have insinuated itself among modern philosophers', and only one or two letters have been exchanged - for this is another epistolary novel - before the (allegedly) Jacobin advocacy of free love is being vigorously indicted with Mary Hays' *Emma Courtney* being exhibited as evidence for the prosecution. Additionally, the plight of Gertrude Sinclair forms a typically moralistic central dynamic to the novel, as she falls victim to Edward D'Oyley's new philosophical opinions on what Lloyd calls 'concubinage', becomes their most ardent disciple, but ultimately finds her lover already married, runs mad herself as a result, and quickly expires when, leaving her pregnant, D'Oyley deserts her and dies himself (I, vii, 36 and 36n. and 40n).

If the novel is unquestionably anti-Jacobin in its main thrust, then, it has radical tendencies, and nowhere are they more apparent than in Lloyd's willingness to have his characters enter into reasoned debate on ideological matters. Will an intelligent person be more virtuous than a dull-witted one as modern philosophers believe, wonder Edmund and Charles, before debating the issue at some length, the arguments laid bare to the reader's gaze so that they might take them up and do with them what they will. And what of equality of rights, asks D'Oyley, the new philosopher, only to be answered by the apparently respectable Charles with studied, but by no means conclusive, arguments that, since personal morality was more important, 'It imports little whether in a criminal process I and the neighbouring Lord be tried by the same laws, and allowed the same privilege of Jury' (I, 181-82)! Neither this, nor Lloyd's opinions on the morality of war or the ethics of surplus capital, were the sort of issue that anti-Jacobins like Bisset expected to see being touted in a novel - who knew what the proverbial milliners' apprentice would make

<sup>29</sup> On the subject of the war, Lloyd does have his representative in the novel, Charles Maurice, call the present conflict a 'just cause', but insists that it is 'disgraced by such unjust means of defending it' (II, 34). Maurice, according to Geoffrey Carnall, is an 'obvious portrait of Southey' (*Robert Southey and his Age. The Development of a Conservative Mind* [Oxford, 1960], p.48), a man who, at the time, was generally thought, and not without reason, a Jacobin. Bisset's review is in *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, 1 (1798), 176-80, attributed to him in Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins*, p.166. Lloyd's response was published as *Letter to the Anti-Jacobin Reviewers* [Birmingham, 1799]. See Burton R. Pollin, 'Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd as Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins', and, for a brief treatment of the novel, see Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.320n.2 and 326 and Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, pp.109-110, who highlights the obvious connections between the career of Edmund and that of Lloyd's friend, Coleridge.



of such arguments? It was just this anxiety, indeed, and the rather paranoid and not wholly accurate conception of who was reading novels in the 1790s, which made Lloyd an exception, and kept almost all anti-Jacobin authors away from any overt, and certainly any unresolved, debate in their fiction.

**Charles Lucas, *The Castle of St. Donats; or, the History of Jack Smith*. 3 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1798**

In *The Castle of St. Donats* Lucas had been careful to follow the expected norms of popular fiction, integrating his conservatism into structures bequeathed to him from innumerable previous novels. Its narrative follows the career of the foundling Jack, the archetypal boy of parts. Having been taken in by the bluff, brave sailor Captain Grey and educated by Grey's judicious, steady friend, William Freeman (these two together seem to represent the two sides of Lucas' idealised British character), Jack undergoes several adventures in rather gothic foreign castles and amongst British new philosophers and 'anti-Anglo politicians' until eventually returning to St. Donats to find his real father, the émigré Duke de Meritè, living in a well, where, having been forced to quit Revolutionary France, he has taken to impersonating the castle ghost. Some of this is rather idiosyncratic, but the fundamentals of both the plot and the anti-Jacobinism are conventional. The lurking banditti and secret passages behind the tapestries in the Italian castles are the very least that we would expect from a gothic novel. Marmaduke Pendragon, the most prominent of the new philosophers, might have wandered out of any anti-Jacobin novel or even, given that he is described principally in terms of his grotesque physical appearance and absurd regurgitation of any bits of 'political cant, London phrases ... [and] gleanings from the playhouse' he has heard, from any novel of fashionable life at all (II, 167-79, 218-21). The Duke de Meritè, living in his well, is perhaps a little curious (but no more so than most of the devices by which novelists, after Radcliffe, explained away the supernatural), but having introduced himself as Jack's long-lost father (a relationship proved by their possession of a uniquely anti-Jacobin pair of artifacts: two crucifixes each containing a lock of the hair from each of the French royal family), and thereby enabled Jack's marriage to his sweetheart, it is not long before he launches into the sort of castigation of the Revolution with which we are already familiar from the novels of Thomas and Smith and others (III, 119-22).

**Charles Lucas, *Infernal Quixote. A Tale of the Day*. 4 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1801<sup>30</sup>**

The aristocratic Jacobin, though perhaps loosely based on the historical reality of Orléans or Mirabeau, and though earlier exemplifying the sheer stupidity and senseless devotion to fashion of a Sir Caprice Ardent, say, by 1800 had become a self-contained symbol of the vice and hypocrisy of the new philosophers for, it was made clear, there was no reason for a noble to take up an ideology so inimical to the interests of his class unless there was some personal gain, usually sexual, sometimes financial, to be made by them individually. It is a point explained in *The Infernal Quixote* which pivots upon the moment when its title character, Lord James Marauder, is frustrated in his ambition to inherit a dukedom and espouses instead a different route to gratification:

'Cursed Aristocracy!' said he, 'thou art but the semblance of greatness: I'll no longer pursue the gaudy shadows! Could I have found thy ascent ready for glory, I would have mounted to the top. I will not servilely follow behind, but I'll hew me out another path. (II, 29)

From here, it is but a short step for Marauder to become Captain Patrick McGinnis and to busy himself in fomenting rebellion in Ireland, a scheme which Lucas skilfully weaves into the recent history of the 1798 Irish Rebellion, and an altogether very satisfactory anti-Jacobin technique, for not only does it expose new philosophy as merely a mask for Marauder's vice, but also demonstrates the Irish Rebellion of 1798 as

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<sup>30</sup> The novel receives some attention in Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.312 and 323-24, Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, pp.113-14, and is extensively quoted in Gregory, *French Revolution and the English Novel*, pp.144-54.



itself the work of selfish and designing villains, not as any real, cogent, or legitimate expression of unrest or discontent.

The *Infernal Quixote* broke new ground in several intriguing ways. The novel's substantial passages concerned with the 1798 Irish Rebellion remind us of nothing so much as Scott's revolutionary *Waverley* (1814) in their historicity. Lucas cleverly interlards the narratives of both Marauder and his hero, Wilson, with recent events which he has obviously made it his especial task to include in some detail, and it was a technique which reached a very Scott-like apogee in the climactic scene, set in the aftermath of the abortive French landing at Killala Bay, in which Marauder and Wilson, each at the head of a column of rebels and soldiers respectively, clash in titanic single combat, wounding each other in an encounter that provided Lucas with a spirited conclusion to volume three. The novel was unusual also in such features as a preface authored by Satan himself, the abrupt inclusion of an impromptu and not unamusing disparaging sonnet on Thomas Paine [sic], an impressive dissection of the many and various constituent parts of the anatomy of Jacobinism, and an account of both a meeting of a respectable though radical debating society (the timidity of whose members, and their fear of being infiltrated by Pitt's agents, provides an interesting illustration of Britain after the Treason Trials and the Seditious Meetings Act of 1795), and a meeting of a secret society, not unlike those the Illuminati might be supposed to hold, conducted in a ruin and replete with talking statues (waxworks, in fact), masked delegates, initiation ceremonies, and oaths sworn to serve the cause of Reason, Liberty and Equality. Even in its title, which commemorates a perpetrator of Jacobinism rather than its victim, Lucas departs from the norm (I, iv-vii, 268; II, 218-97, 206-208, 331-44).

Yet in other ways, *The Infernal Quixote*, like *The Castle of St. Donats*, is a fairly conventional anti-Jacobin work, notably in its plot, in which Marauder, as well as touring Britain's radical communities and agitating in Ireland, sets his sights on attempting to debauch first Emily (successfully) and then her sister, Fanny, who is saved only by the prompt intervention of Wilson. And as in Lucas' earlier novel, this is deliberate conventionality too, an attempt to enhance his novels' appeal and ideological efficacy through appropriation rather than innovation. Ultimately, what is most significant is that by 1801, we can use the word 'conventional' of anti-Jacobin fiction at all. From *Vaurien* in 1797 to *The Infernal Quixote* in 1801 little, in essence, had changed, and a coherent genre had been established.

### **Edward Mangin, *George the Third. A Novel*. 3 vols., James Carpenter, London, 1807**

Anti-Jacobinism offered novelists a marvellously thrilling setting for their narratives, and tales of the French Revolution continued to be popular with authors and audiences alike well into the 1810s, sustaining an anti-Jacobin presence in fiction for the next generation of readers. Mangin's fiction provides a perfect case in point. It tells the story of George Ardent (the third George in his family, hence the novel's title) and his experiences in Revolutionary Paris, where he is persecuted by Robespierre and sentenced to die by the guillotine. After this, having been freed upon Robespierre's death, he meets up with Charette and the Chouans in the Vendée, where he is persuaded to impersonate a French prince, for the purpose of sustaining the morale of the counter-Revolutionaries. Before long they help him rescue a foundering ship which, coincidentally, contains his long-lost sweetheart. Back in Britain a nabob uncle suddenly appears, and George can marry and bring the novel happily to a close.

This sounds like nothing so much as an historical novel, and not necessarily of the most sophisticated stamp; Mangin after all was describing events of thirteen years previous to publication, and using them to provide an exhilarating backdrop for his hero's adventures. Robespierre enters the plot only so that he can fall from office, and facilitate George's liberation. The Chouans likewise are present only to effect the reunion of George and Arabella. And yet a residual anti-Jacobinism is still clearly present. Not only is the Revolution itself described only in terms of opprobrium, but several specifically didactic elements are introduced. Mangin went out of his way, for instance, to have an ordinary Parisian landlady scathingly tell George that happiness, liberty and fraternity have never been delivered by the Revolution, whatever anyone might say; and he also very explicitly laments that the British government shamefully neglected to support the counter-Revolution when it had a chance of succeeding (II, 154, 212, 227-28).

**John Moore, *Mordaunt. Sketches of Life, Characters, and Manners, in Various Countries; including the Memoirs of a French Lady of Quality*. 3 vols., Robinsons, London, 1800<sup>31</sup>**

Like Helen Craik, who also cites the work, Moore was clearly in debt to his own *Journal During a Residence in France* (1793-94) for this novel of the French Revolution. Whilst the *Journal* records Moore's experiences in Paris from December 1792, the novel charts the progress of John Mordaunt from his arrival there 'at the beginning of August 1792' and continues to read more like history than fiction for the ensuing three volumes as the characters discourse on the progress of the Revolution and various other equally weighty matters, the meagre plot, although it ends in the mandatory marriages, remaining entirely subsidiary. Also like *Adelaide de Narbonne*, *Mordaunt* portrays its protagonist's approbation of the initial, and then Girondin, Revolutions, and Moore condemns outright only its hijack by the Jacobins. Moore concentrates his fire on Robespierre, Jean-Marie Collot d'Herbois and Georges Couthon, whilst Craik had selected Marat, but each is more or less interchangeable, as are Victorine, the last hope of the royalists in *Adelaide de Narbonne*, and Princess Elizabeth, the King's sister, whom Moore eulogises in *Mordaunt*.

*Mordaunt* does appear to lapse into explicit propaganda on occasion, as, for instance, when our hero very deliberately singles out for especial reprehension the Edict of Fraternity, that most galling of Revolutionary decrees to the British with its promise of French support for 'that party in every country which contended for liberty', or anyone, as Mordaunt puts it, 'who strove to upset the government' (I, 272). Yet Moore often openly insists that Jacobinism has been 'checked in all the countries of Europe, particularly in Great-Britain', evincing, rather complacently perhaps since he is still theoretically talking of the early '90s, his faith in a conservative victory in the Revolution debate. Indeed, on closer inspection, it is often not the anti-Jacobinism of his readers that Moore is reluctant to assume, but their commitment to the War against France, which, given that by 1800 Revolution was on the point of turning into Consulate and Empire in France, could be a very different thing. Throughout *Mordaunt*, Moore's specific propagandistic aim, though it does not by any means run contrary to the underlying anti-Jacobin theme, was to provide a rejoinder to those calling for peace by pointing out that what Britain was fighting for in 1800, even if her enemy was now Napoleon and not Robespierre, was scarcely different to what she had undertaken to fight in 1793. Thus, Mordaunt, though nominally speaking in 1792, delivers this key-note address:

To check the towering ambition of France is the evident interest of all the nations of Europe, and that of Great Britain as much of any. All disputes regarding the necessity of commencing the war are at present idle and superfluous: the plain interest of every honest well-meaning individual in Great-Britain is, cordially to join, to the utmost of his capacity, against the ambition and rapacity of the French republic (I, 65-66).

The one part of *Mordaunt* which has most in common with other anti-Jacobin novels is neither this first section nor the concluding one, in both of which Moore's characters discuss the issues of the day, but a 144-page inset tale, ostensibly recounted to one of the novel's heroines by a French émigrée, 'the Marquise', and around which the rest of the novel pivots. The Marquise tells of her fate after her husband left France to join the émigré army, of her persecution by 'the Count', an aristocrat turned Jacobin whose friendship with the leaders of the Revolution enabled him to arrange for the arrest and guillotining of the Marquise's mother, her only protector, and then her own imprisonment - all done so that he might force her into marrying him. It is a tale that Moore tells well too, but it is far from unique. Not only is it familiar from *Adelaide de Narbonne*, in which Marat had used his power for the self-same purpose, but from two novels by Mary Robinson as well as the anonymous *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805), each of which feature similar scenarios. Above all, what this recurrence signifies is the way in which, by the turn of the century, such narratives had become conventional fare for novels rather than fulfilling only a positively polemical purpose.

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<sup>31</sup> For brief considerations of Moore (who seems fleetingly to have been regarded as one of the best of the late eighteenth century novelists, even meriting the rare republication of his fiction in 1965, though his star has now waned) see W. L. Renwick [Oxford, 1963], *The Rise of the Romantics 1789-1815*, pp.17-18 and n. and 60-62, Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.177-79, as well as Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, pp.25-27 and 309. Kelly has also made the case for a reading of one of Moore's earlier novels, *Edward. Various Views of Human Nature taken from Life and Manners, Chiefly in England* (1796) as a rather radical novel, warning the British government of the likely consequences of the sort of political repression employed at the Treason Trials of 1794: 'Enlightenment and Revolution: The Philosophical Novels of Dr John Moore', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 1 (1989), 219-37.

**Hugh Murray, *The Swiss Emigrants: A Tale*. 1 vol., Longman & Rees, London, 1804**

*The Swiss Emigrants* is as anti-Gallican a novel, at least in design if not always in execution, as had appeared during the Revolution crisis, its story of an idyllic Swiss community brutally torn apart by the invading French in 1797 leaving no room for ambiguity. Murray's preface struck a carefully worked balance between concern for Britain's future and confidence in its resolve, but above all else, even in 1804, sought to excite his readers' vigilance by figuring Britain as the next domino to fall to the French menace. Indeed, the entire novel was dedicated, if we believe its preface, to exciting the courage and patriotism of Britain in preparation for the invasion of 'the same restless and domineering potentate' as had overcome Switzerland, namely Napoleon. The concern is undeniably mixed with a certain complacency however:

At the present moment also, when our independence, and our very existence as a nation, are threatened by the same restless and domineering potentate, the examples here exhibited, of love for our country, and courage in defending it, may not be without their use. It is a pleasing reflection, however, that this spirit should already have risen so high, as to render further encouragement almost superfluous; and that, should this threatened invasion take place, the union, the strength, the patriotism of this mighty nation, must secure to it a very different issue, from that fatal one which is here recorded (xix).

The narrative itself, on the other hand, ends unhappily. Julia is about to marry when the French invade and kill her lover. The narrator, her father, is captured, but at the end of the novel he is able to make his way back to the village where he and Julia had lived happily before the invasion. There he finds the place in ruins and the villagers distraught, and he and his daughter sink into a miserable death.

**Amelia Opie, *Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter: A Tale*. 3 vols., Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, London, 1804**

Like R. C. Dallas' Emma Coverley, Adeline wrestles with the sort of limitations of female behaviour rigidly imposed by society and identified and complained of in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Like Wollstonecraft and Godwin, she also abjures marriage, but later finds it advisable to marry. It has doubtless been these Wollstonecraftian affinities which have made *Adeline Mowbray* such a contested text. Some critics, Dale Spender for instance, have located the novel in the radical tradition, reading it as an attack on the restrictions enforced by society on certain 'Jacobin' modes of (especially female) behaviour. Others, such as Marilyn Butler, have understood it as a classically anti-Jacobin work.<sup>32</sup>

Yet although the novel deals with the standard issues of both Jacobin and anti-Jacobin literature in a slightly more complex fashion than was perhaps usual, allowing the reader a certain degree of sympathy with Adeline in her predicament, the novel clearly does remain true to the anti-Jacobin orthodoxy, Adeline eventually dying repentant in the arms of her new philosophical, but now also repentant, mother, and asking that her child should be taught to be 'slow to call the experience of ages contemptible prejudices' and to ensure that she 'wanders not in the night of scepticism' (1805 edn.: III,

<sup>32</sup> Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel. 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* [London, 1986], pp.315-24, who gives a concise summary of *Adeline Mowbray* as well as emphasising Opie's radical credentials. Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p.121, calls the novel 'the usual cautionary tale of the anti-Jacobins'. Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, pp.49-54, strikes a middle way, pointing out that Opie clearly designed her novel as a conservative warning, but noting that she looked upon her heroine, and Wollstonecraft too, with compassion, and even understanding, in a way that many anti-Jacobins would have found offensive and unsafe. There seems little doubt that Opie's contemporaries regarded the novel as at least *aiming* to be conservative. James Mackintosh, for example, had no doubt about her anti-Jacobin 'object', although he considered her to have failed to achieve it, thus allowing the (unfounded) suspicion to arise that she had produced a critique of society more in keeping with the radical tradition: 'Mrs Opie has pathetic means, but the object is not attained; for the distress is not made to arise from the opinions of the world against it; so that it may as well be taken to be a satire on our prejudices in favour of marriage, as on the paradoxes of sophists against it.' *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, ed. Robert James Mackintosh [London, 1835], I, 255. See also Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, pp.83-86, for an enthusiastic appreciation of Opie's fiction in general terms.



270). Moreover, when read in the context of the anti-Jacobin novel as a whole, *Adeline Mowbray* presents its heroine as a victim of new philosophical sophistry every bit as much as had been the case in many less problematic conservative novels. Adeline's mother, for instance, a ludicrous disciple of a new philosophy she only half understands but a proud mother who attempts, all too successfully, to pass on what she considers her fashionable opinions to her more apt daughter, reminds us of no-one so much as Mrs Botherim in *Modern Philosophers*, the root cause of Bridgetina's folly. Likewise, Glenmurray, who deludes Adeline into her new philosophy but finds that she refuses his recompensing offers of marriage, perfectly conforms to the basic pattern of political quixotes developed over the previous decade, being, like Sir George Warrington or Dorothea Melville, a man led into new philosophy through his too enthusiastic and idealistic philanthropy, but coming to renounce it once he has realised that it must inevitably fail once put into practice.

Butler sees *Adeline Mowbray* as Opie's attempt to return to the conservative fold, which, if true, makes one wonder why it took until 1804 for Opie to make her bid for rehabilitation. In fact, the process had probably begun a little earlier. Opie's *The Father and Daughter* of 1801, a tale of the daughter's elopement, her father's consequent fall into madness, her return to nurse him, and their virtually simultaneous deaths, had struck an almost identical moral stance. The novel had been a remarkable success with three quick editions, and it probably encouraged Opie to develop (but only slightly) the same theme in *Adeline Mowbray*, all that was required being the conversion of the heroine's crime from elopement to a new philosophical disdain for matrimony and the recasting of the Father as a Mother.

What is evident is that Opie had discovered that conservative morality and politics sold well and offered an author a rich seam - which she continued to mine during the remainder of her increasingly acclaimed career. In the Evangelical *Valentine's Eve* (1816), for instance, she included a distinctly Jacobin new philosopher 'whom profligacy and poverty led to rally round that respectable standard, which was originally erected from the purest and most disinterested love of civil and religious liberty', but which had since, as she went on to show, become adapted as a mask for folly, vice and hypocrisy (I, 54). Even by the time of *Tales of the Heart* in 1820, Opie was turning to the French Revolution as the setting for one of her tales, its black and white moral geography perfectly suiting her work. She placed her heroine in its midst, having her establish a cake shop in Paris supplying Danton and Robespierre. Reading this sort of treatment of Jacobinism back into *Adeline Mowbray*, it becomes apparent that the Revolution and new philosophy provided only the infrastructure within which Opie could develop her portrayal of a woman faced with a moral dilemma essentially derived from the gap between what she knew to be right and what society deemed proper. In this sense, *Adeline Mowbray* does appear to transcend the conventional patterns of anti-Jacobin fiction developed over the eight or nine years prior to its publication. Yet the fact remains that if its reception is allowed to determine its meaning, as surely it must, then the novel must be counted as a thoroughly anti-Jacobin text, for the great majority of its readers in 1804 and after would have seen it, with its orthodox dénouement, cautionary repentance, and lexicon drawn from the debate on the Revolution, as operating firmly within what by 1804 had become an easily identifiable tradition of literary anti-Jacobinism.

#### **S. Pearson, *The Medallion*. 3 vols., Robinson's, London, 1794**

I have not been able to consult a copy of Pearson's novel since no extant copies are recorded in the major catalogues. A substantial review of it is to be found in the *Critical Review* (n.s., 12 [September 1794], 99-102) however, and another in the *British Critic* (4 [November 1795], 544), both of which give a flavour of the anti-Jacobinism which formed at least part of its satire. It is R. Watt, in the *Bibliotheca Britannica* [London, 1824], who attributes the novel to Susanna Pearson of Sheffield.

Using a not uncommon fictional plan, Pearson recounts the experiences of the medallion of the title as it is passed from person to person from Roman times to the present. In one episode, in the novel's present, the medallion is witness to the conversation of 'a French enthusiast in politics', as the *Critical's* reviewer calls him, and 'a plain, honest Englishman', whose understanding of the Revolution and its doctrines clearly stops short of anything other than that it aims to level all distinctions in society. Furthermore, the Frenchman's characterisation of what the Revolution is about only confirms the Englishman's suspicions, as 'the adventurer' (as the pro-Revolutionary is called) professes that 'all men are



born equal, and are so in reality', and champions 'a system by which the peer is levelled with the shepherd, and the servant seated on the bench with his master' (*Critical Review*, pp. 99-100).

Such a disparaging understanding of the Revolution was common amongst the anti-Jacobins of course, and both Edward Sayer and T. Wright had already revolved their fictional attacks on Jacobinism around this theme, but the publication of this novel in 1794 still sets it apart as an unusually early example of overtly anti-Jacobin fiction.

**Anna Maria Porter, *The Hungarian Brothers*. 3 vols., Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, London, 1807**

It is not entirely misrepresenting Porter's novel to call it, as the *Dictionary of National Biography* has done, 'a tale of the French revolutionary war', for the narrative follows two Austrian brothers fighting that war in 1793-97, and we are treated to detailed descriptions of their campaigns, lengthy exordiums on their anti-Revolutionary sentiments and the virtues of the French court, as well as numerous damning references to new philosophy, the invasion of Switzerland and the cruelty of Napoleon's army (I, 166-68, 174; II, 203-10; III, 237). Yet, as Ann Jones has pointed out, the novel is really not about the historical events it takes for its setting, nor even about the love affairs of the brothers which are interweaved between battles, but concentrates on the lessons the older brother teaches the younger about the correct and proper manner for an aristocrat to behave. The Revolutionary wars are a fine setting for the plot, presenting a whole new range of tribulations against which the protagonists may be measured. They also form a perfect backdrop for the rather bland morality that the Evangelically-inclined Porter chose to make the key-note of her fiction.<sup>33</sup>

**Henry James Pye, *The Democrat: Interspersed with Anecdotes of Well Known Characters*. 2 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1795<sup>34</sup>**

Superficially, *The Democrat* and Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron* would seem to have little in common beyond the year of their publication and their clearly shared anti-Jacobin commitment. Thomas was an unknown author publishing her novel by subscription; Pye was Poet Laureate from 1790 (though the constant butt of ridicule) and chose to use the most notorious publishing house of the day, the Minerva Press. Furthermore, whilst Thomas' had been, from the British perspective, an optimistic novel, lamenting what had happened in France, but basing her appeal to her readers on the manifest excellence of the British government and way of life and consequently dismissing the radical menace as nugatory, Pye's novel was organised around a much more pessimistic principle, namely that revolution imminently threatened Britain herself. Repeating Price's theory (though with the opposite intention) that the light of liberty, once lit in America, had passed to France and must soon illuminate Britain, Pye made clear that, in his opinion, the 'seeds of republicanism' had been sown amongst the French army while they were in America in the aftermath of the War of Independence and had produced an abundant harvest of the same product in their own country. Moreover, the English Channel was far from broad enough to prevent their further propagation in Britain (1796 edn.: I, 12).

Yet beneath the surface, these two novels have much in common. In *The Democrat*, the agent of the propagation that Pye had so feared is his anti-hero, Jean Le Noir, whose biography fills the opening pages of the novel. He was in America with the French army, we learn, before returning to his native France at the outbreak of the Revolution where, as if a personification of the French Edict of Confraternity of 1793 (by which the French government promised support to any incipient revolutionary nation), 'he

<sup>33</sup> Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, pp.139-40, and pp.115-16.

<sup>34</sup> *The Democrat* had a second edition, also from the Minerva, in 1796 in addition to a New York edition in 1795. Almost no biographical or critical research has been undertaken on Pye, who is generally regarded as little more than an incompetent poetaster. Indeed, rather astonishingly, of the modern cultural historians who have investigated anti-Jacobin fiction, only Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p.117n.1, and Harvey, 'George Walker and the Anti-Revolutionary Novel', p.292n.2, have made mention of either of Pye's two classically anti-Jacobin novels, and then only in brief foot-notes.

turned his thoughts anxiously to the idea of introducing a system of equalization and fraternity between the *degenerate* Britons, and his own regenerated countrymen' (I, 15). Convinced of the ripeness of Britain for such a scheme, an impression he had gleaned from its pusillanimous Parliament and the exaggerated press-coverage of its radical societies, he crossed the Channel and began his work of inciting rebellion. But no sooner had he arrived than he was forced to confront the genuine, thriving contentment of the people and was forced 'to doubt if French equality, or French fraternity, could add to the prosperity of the inhabitants' (I, 16-17, 24). It is an impression which only gets stronger during his two-volume stay in Great Britain, so that ultimately we find that Pye has developed the same optimistic confidence that Thomas had started out with in *Adolphus de Biron*. Le Noir encounters plenty of '*sans culottes Anglais*' on his peregrinations, but always discovers their political opinions to be motivated solely by self-interest and their apparent radicalism to be nothing but hypocrisy - substituting an abject sycophancy for their avowed levelling sentiments when in the presence of nobility say, or inveighing against the wickedness of a hierarchical society yet persecuting any wretched vassal found poaching on their land. Since ultimately every Briton could expect his or her interests to be served best by the existing system, Le Noir finds, to his great chagrin, that sooner or later all those whom he considers to be potential Jacobins turn into irreproachable loyalists. Indeed, by the time he is finally exposed as a villain in the conventional terms of fiction, as the abductor of the beautiful émigrée Adelaide, he has not only found not a single genuine radical in Britain, but has seen both whigs and Jacobites unite in contempt for the French Revolution, has witnessed the perfect patriotism of the army and navy, rendering all his schemes of inciting mutiny seem preposterous (although events at Spithead and the Nore in 1797-98 were to prove Pye's confidence misplaced in this instance), and has confirmed, through his own encounters with it, the British legal system to be a model of both mercy and justice (I, 39-49, 163-71, 50-56, 145-46; II, 22, 61). Pye's novel, in effect, exhibits more confidence about the inevitable dissipation of the Jacobin threat than had Thomas' blithe faith in Britain's inviolable virtue. But the figure Pye had developed, the Jacobin character who travelled around Britain attempting to incite rebellion, could operate anywhere on a sliding scale between optimism and trepidation. Whilst Le Noir had found British radicalism a dead duck, later such figures would find revolution a frighteningly imminent prospect.

**Henry James Pye, *The Aristocrat, a Novel*. 2 vols., Sampson Low, London, 1799**

To target an *enlightened* and *fashionable* education, as so many anti-Jacobin novelists did (thinking perhaps that in this one area they might actually be able to influence their readers and make a contribution to the welfare of the country) was clearly to take a sideswipe at Rousseau's *Émile* and *Julia, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*. Pye made the point plain in *The Aristocrat*, blaming the Frenchified tutor, Mr Mortlock, for Sir Edward Eaglefield's regrettable dalliance with new philosophy, and targeting particularly Mortlock's ludicrous sensibility which made him rail against just the sort of manly, English activities which had long succeeded in making Sir Edward's ancestors a credit to their nation. If any reader shared in this 'reasoning of the philosopher of the foreign school', Pye advises almost at the novel's outset - if, in other words, they wished to ban fox-hunting or, more seriously, 'if they wish to carry the refinement of education so far as to disable the rising generation from defending every thing dear to them against real' - that is to say Jacobin - 'cruelty and violence' - he would candidly suggest to them that they 'proceed no further, but immediately ... shut the volume, and send it back to the circulating library' (I, 25).

But even if this was not so much a genuine warning as a device designed to co-opt the reader into an automatic agreement with Pye's opinions, none of his more liberal readers could possibly have a case for saying that they had not been cautioned.

Had anyone of an even slightly 'enlightened' inclination penetrated beyond Pye's introduction, he or she would have found even the slightest hint of heresy under vigorous assault from all sides, almost the full gamut of anti-Jacobin techniques levelled against deviance from the conservative orthodoxy. Sir Edward is cured of Mortlock's poison through a combination of satire of new philosophy, especially of the hypocrisy of its acolytes, encounters with the real Revolution in progress in France in the early '90s, and a gradual introduction to the virtues of the British constitution and British society which culminates in a peroration celebrating monarchy and aristocracy which, though it might conceivably have been expected to be heard issuing from a pulpit, or printed in Hansard, certainly seems out of place in a circulating

library novel. The novel ends when the not coincidentally named Mr Aldworth distributes his fortune to allow all the characters to marry according to their wishes. This is anti-Jacobin fiction at its most assured.

**Clara Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon, the natural son of Edward Prince of Wales, commonly called the Black Prince; with anecdotes of many other eminent persons of the fourteenth century*. 3 vols., Hookham and Carpenter, London, 1793**

Like the anonymous *Minstrel*, of the same year and publishers, Reeve's novel (although a tale of the fourteenth, rather than the fifteenth, century) seems an attempt to refute the dangerous doctrines of Price and the radicals regarding the legitimacy of the people somehow choosing their governors. 'May despotism be for ever abolished! - May a just a benevolent system arise upon its ruins!' Reeve piously hoped in her preface, but 'if the populace are allowed to overturn the government,' she warned, 'and by their wisdom frame a new constitution' - heavy irony here and echoes of Price - 'they will soon find it defective, and by the same right set aside the first, and fabricate a second, and a third, and so on: how can there be anything permanent in such a state' (I, xviii-xix). For all sorts of reasons, in fact, *Sir Roger de Clarendon*, though it still evinces a degree of reluctance about introducing politics into fiction, should certainly to be considered an anti-Jacobin novel, and one that must have been particularly influential given the eminent status accorded to its author. With her trend-setting *Old English Baron* (first published as *The Champion of Virtue* in 1777) and her critical analysis of modern fiction, *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Reeve had established herself as something of an elder stateswoman of the literary world of the 1790s. When she published *Sir Roger de Clarendon*, therefore, she was accorded substantial reviews in all the major periodicals, not merely the usual slight mentions in the catalogue sections, and even if the reviewers were not exactly adoring, reluctantly pronouncing the novel dull, they all noticed Reeve's evident moral, that is to say, conservative political purpose.<sup>35</sup> Given that Reeve had already turned her hand to gothic tales, Oriental tales, sentimental novels - almost the whole range of available fictional forms - we might imagine that her anti-Jacobinism was simply the latest in a long line of literary experiments, undertaken perhaps in the pursuit of fashion or a market. But her anti-Jacobin credentials seem imposing enough - a 'Biographical and Literary Sketch' in the *Morning Herald* of 1802, for instance, stresses her political quietism - and the novel itself expresses in no uncertain terms an ideological commitment well beyond mere conservative orthodoxy.<sup>36</sup>

What immediately becomes clear is that *Sir Roger de Clarendon* is firmly in the same tradition as Wright's *Solyman and Fatima*, dedicating itself to exposure of the fallacy of equality. Indeed, this purpose, Reeve confided in her preface, was responsible for the novel's archaic setting. Her chief stimulus in writing the novel, she vouchsafed, was to depict a 'well-governed kingdom, wherein a true subordination of ranks and degrees was observed', and thus, for instance, we hear of how during the reign of Richard II (Burke's age of chivalry given substance, we cannot help but realise) the man who lived beyond his degree in life was shunned and despised, of how no cards or dice, nor swearing nor drinking, corrupted the 'gentleman of old times' and the social hierarchy he represented - all in stark contrast to 'the self-created gentleman of the eighteenth-century' (I, xvi, 67). Clearly, Reeve did not mean her exposé of levelling to be confined to the realms of a distant Other, but installed a comparative mechanism. She was always anxious expressly to link her medieval paradigm with the current revolution crisis and its perceived equalising impulse, comparing, for example, the Providential and functional hierarchical

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<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the reviews of *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* see Derek Roper, *Reviewing before the 'Edinburgh'*. 1788-1802 [London, 1978], pp.163-64.

<sup>36</sup> The *Morning Herald* of November 11, 1802 quotes a letter of Reeve's to a friend, written, the paper claims, 'at that period when PAINE'S *Rights of Man*, and the proceedings of certain Societies, had occasioned a general discussion of politics'. Reeve apparently unburdened herself thus: 'Faction men are continually writing Pamphlets that stimulate to sedition and revolt. Under these circumstances, it is better to bear the ills we have, than to fly to others which we know not of. On the other hand, many people are of opinion [*sic*], that nothing but a Parliamentary Reform can prevent a Revolution. I hope not - for the *Levellers* to bring forward a Revolution, is the *greatest evil* that Britain has to fear; it would renew the *old times* of anarchy and confusion, which may God forbid.' For sketchy details of Reeve's literary career see Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.231-32 and 231n.1.



structure of fourteenth-century England with 'the new philosophy of the present day' which 'avows a levelling principle, and declares that a state of anarchy is more beautiful than that of order and regularity'. Indeed, the real aim of her narrative, as she ultimately reveals, was to draw specifically on events in 'a neighbour country', where the succession of 'favourites of the public' recently to be seen rising to prominence and then passing away like smoke, ought to teach Britain to 'shudder at the scene before her, and grasp her blessings the closer', the historical tale the vehicle for her instruction (I, xvi-xx).

So it is that Reeve kills off her hero some way before the end of the novel, bringing to an end a tale which, as the reviews had pointed out, had become increasingly bogged down in Froissart-like catalogues of the battles of the Hundred Years' War, genealogies of the aristocracy and lists of fourteenth-century worthies. This leaves the last pages of the novel free of narrative, allowing room for her commentary on the Revolution and her proposed prophylactics against its contagion. If one has read the foregoing two and a half volumes, it must come as no surprise that what she prescribes for each Briton is that they acknowledge and abide by their several stations in life, and fulfil all the duties incumbent upon them as a result of their various ranks. She even details the special responsibilities of any princes, nobles and public officers who may be reading, as well as those of tradesmen, artisans and 'the people at large' (III, 228-29). What is more striking, though, is Reeve's understanding of the French Revolution, still remarkably un-Burkean in its balanced regard for the events of 1789-92, especially in the light of Reeve's evident debt to his conceptions of chivalry and the slow evolution of the British constitution, of which she apparently sees one stage in the deposition of Richard II. She talks of those 'who effected the revolution, and framed the first constitution' in France with respect, and she still has hope for the future of the Revolution - that 'some unforeseen event' may 'yet redeem the honour of the country'. Of course, it is in this last phrase that we can begin to see the alteration that has occurred since the very first anti-Jacobin novels were produced. Reeve was understanding the Revolution a little less, and condemning it a little more, for though, as she had one of her characters say, 'despotism, where no man is assured of his life of property,' is to be 'shunned and deprecated', she had her hero, Roger, authoritatively explain that 'it seldom happens, that a whole nation shall unite to throw off the yoke of a tyrant, without the greatest injuries' (III, 224, 225, 9, 55-56).

What had happened in the meantime, of course, was that the Revolution had taken a new turn, and descended into massacre, military menace and regicide. Reeve comprehended this mutation almost entirely in terms of the latter, a neat and wholly deliberate ploy in view of the fact that 'the untimely death of princes' was a theme which had pervaded her novel. Having disposed of her protagonists and charted the overthrow of Richard II in her narrative, Reeve went on to provide a chronicle of monarchs falling prey to faction and fanaticism, from Henri III of France to Charles I and James II of England. But, she concluded,

It was reserved for the eighteenth century of the christian æra, which boasts of its illumination and progress in philosophy, to give fresh instances of the untimely death of virtuous princes, and to shew proofs of the influence of a new kind of fanaticism, which cannot be derived from the abuses of religion, but runs counter to religion, laws, civilization, and humanity.

She is referring, of course, to what she calls the 'murder' of Louis XVI, and it is significant that she no longer sees him as a representative of the despotic *ancien régime*, but as a kind man willing to reform, she claims, the system which he had inherited (III, 216, 222-23).

**Mary Robinson, *Hubert de Sevrac, A Romance, of the Eighteenth Century*. 3 vols., Hookham & Carpenter, London 1796**

Of the seven or eight novels commonly attributed to Mary Robinson, two deal extensively with the Revolution and concern themselves largely with the persecution of a lovely heroine by men whose habitual villainy has been able to flourish during the political and moral turmoil of the '90s in France. In fact, both these works give the lie to the identification of Robinson as a 'Jacobin' author, a view current in



the late eighteenth century, having been put abroad by such anti-Jacobin zealots as T. J. Mathias and William Gifford, and still not wholly shaken off.<sup>37</sup>

*Hubert de Sevrac* opens (in the Summer of 1792) with a lengthy discussion between its heroine, Sabina, and her father, Hubert, on the legitimacy of the Revolution. Hubert, a French aristocrat but a generous and humane man, knows himself guilty by complicity for the manifest crimes of the *ancien régime*, and thus for precipitating the Revolution. Yet alongside this, and uniting both father and daughter, is an unquestionable contempt for the Revolution with its slaughter of innocents and crimes which exactly reiterate the worst of those horrors perpetrated by the old order (Dublin edn., 1796: I, 1-6; II, 6-7). In fact, as the de Sevracs chase around the Italian peninsula it is mostly other French émigré aristocrats who continually harass them, notably the wicked de Briancour, the very personification of the *ancien régime* and its abuses, although, importantly, he is also shown to have been an inveterate enemy of Louis XVI, amending what might otherwise have been considered an endorsement of the Revolution's overthrow of such villains into an attack on only one individual part of the *ancien régime* (its corrupt nobility), not its overall probity. And it is no surprise when one of Sabina's other persecutors - inevitably trying to force her into marriage with his son - reveals himself to be something of a Jacobin, blaming Hubert for 'the sufferings of the people' as one of those who 'knew that millions groaned under oppression, and yet ... revelled amidst the spoils, wrung from their wretched hearts' (II, 142-43; I, 82). The novel ends with Sabina and her family reaching Britain where, needless to say, she can marry the lover who has been tracking her around Europe and begin a new, happy life.

**Mary Robinson, *The Natural Daughter. With Portraits of the Leadenhead Family. A Novel.* 2 vols., Longman & Rees, London, 1799**

In Robinson's second Revolution novel the utter abhorrence at what had transpired in France which had formed the backdrop to the wanderings of the émigrées in *Hubert de Sevrac* had been so greatly emphasised that it entirely obscured any other view of the events of the '90s. Again, Robinson chose the era of the Terror for her fiction, and sent two heroines into the midst of it. First a Mrs Sedgely, once a mild advocate of the Revolution, tells her tale - of imprisonment in Paris, of a promise of freedom if she would agree to marry the man who could secure it, and of his betrayal of her once she had agreed to his demands, leaving her still in the *Abbaye* gaol and pregnant. It is with little surprise that we find that the 'pretended priest' who had officiated at their wedding '*à la Revolution*' was merely Marat's valet, and, if one is at all versed in anti-Jacobin fiction, it must be with a sense of inevitability that one discovers that the next visitor to Mrs Sedgely, again promising liberation if she would give herself to him (and then promising her a speedy death when she refuses), is none other than Marat himself. His assassination the following day rescues her from her fate (I, 209-13).

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<sup>37</sup> As is pointed out whenever Robinson is given scholarly attention (which is seldom), T. J. Mathias thought Robinson 'tainted with democracy', *The Pursuits of Literature. A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues. With Notes* [7th edn., London, 1798], p.58n.zz. See also William Gifford, *The Mæviad* [1795; London, 1811], II, 23-27. Mathias' tag has stuck very tenaciously to Robinson's reputation and has not been entirely shaken off in the two centuries since her death despite a sort of ecumenical anti-Jacobinism which is evident as early as 1791, when she published the pamphlet *Impartial Reflections on the Queen of France*, followed up in 1793 (apparently with Burke's encouragement - see *Poetical Works of the Late Mrs Robinson* [London, 1824], p.4) with the poem, *Monody to the Memory of the Queen of France*, and which pervades almost every page of at least some of her later novels. Probably this is largely because of her involvement with Godwin's circle and the iconoclastic social rôles she often undertook rather than because of the mild scepticism of orthodox opinions which occasionally colours her fiction. Tompkins, for instance, points out that Robinson 'stood on the fringe of the revolutionary circle' and was 'liberal in her sympathies', but adds that she was never 'philosophic' (*Popular Novel in England*, p.301n.). See also M. Ray Adams, *Studies in the Literary Backgrounds of English Radicalism* [Lancaster, Penn., 1947]; Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805* [Oxford, 1976], pp.12, 112 and 268 and *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, pp.26 and 313-14 (Kelly characterises Robinson as a Jacobin whose commitment soon faded); Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p.31; and *Perdita. The Memoirs of Mary Robinson*, ed. M. J. Levy [1801; London, 1994]. Besides the two novels considered here, her other fictional works are generally accepted to include *Vancenza; or, the Dangers of Credulity* (1792), *The Widow; or, a Picture of Modern Times* (1794), *Angelina: A Novel* (January 1796), *Walsingham; or, the Pupil of Nature* (1797) and *The False Friend. A Domestic Story* (February 1799), but to these Kelly (*English Fiction*, p.314) adds *The Shrine of Bertha* (1794) and Dale Spender (*Mothers of the Novel*, p.133), *The Wanderings of the Imagination* (1796).

The same pattern is repeated later in the novel when Robinson dispatches her central character, the pious Martha, and her husband, Mr Morley, on a course which takes them through Revolutionary Paris. They too are arrested and held in the *Abbaye*, and are taken before the Revolutionary tribunal where Martha finds her judge to be none other than her abandoned sister, Julia, now the lover of Robespierre. All seems lost, for Julia is determined either to have Mr Morley as her new lover, or to see him die on the scaffold, but the Revolution being what it is, they do not have to wait long before Robespierre is overthrown, guillotined himself, and all his prisoners freed. Though it affords them their freedom, it is this moment that Robinson chooses to prosecute her most stringent attack on the Revolution, for worse than the despotism of Robespierre is the dreadful, lawless vengeance perpetrated by his victims when suddenly released from their incarceration (II, 265-69).

But *The Natural Daughter* is more varied than most Revolution novels. Most interestingly, as with the works of Charlotte Smith with whom Robinson was often associated, the novel is clearly highly autobiographical, and as such it is a very valuable document explaining the changing attitudes in Britain to the Revolution. We can see Robinson in Martha, the central character of the novel who is rejected by polite society after her philandering husband deserts her (as Robinson had been deserted by her own husband, then the Prince of Wales, and then Colonel Bonastre Tarleton). Indeed, Martha turns novelists and Robinson uses the opportunity to lament the unfairness of the publishing trade. More intriguingly, Mrs Sedgely is also clearly in many respects an autobiographical character, and one whom Robinson uses to protest against the political slurs cast against her by T. J. Mathias and others. Having been compelled into her false marriage under duress by Marat and his associates, Mrs Sedgely, upon her return to Britain, is unwilling to seek the help of her family because, she says, they will not accept that her pregnancy was forced upon her. Sedgely's coerced pregnancy, in other words, acts as a metaphor for her fleeting approval of the Revolution, her family regarding both as a sort of prostitution. In both cases - when she endorsed the Revolution, and when she believed various Revolutionaries' promises to set her free from prison if she entered into sexual relations with them - Sedgely trusted the promises of men who later proved to be motivated purely by selfish desire. Just as Robinson argues that Sedgely should not be blamed for her credulity and consequent pregnancy, so, we are told, she ought not to be blamed for believing the fine-sounding promises of those who engineered the Revolution itself. Sedgely makes her renunciation of the Revolution as it appeared in 1793-94 clear, admitting that 'The horrible scenes which I had witnessed justified [her family's] sentiments, and had I dared to present myself before them, I would have convinced their minds, that though an idolater of Rational Liberty, I most decidedly execrated the cruelty and licentiousness which blacken the page of Time, while History traces the annals of this momentous æra.' But she also complains that

Every individual who shrinks from oppression, every friend to the superior claims of worth and genius, is, in these suspecting times, condemned without even an examination; though were truth and impartiality to influence their judges, they would be found the first to venerate the sacred rights of social order, and the last to uphold the atrocities of anarchy (I, 214-15).

In this we can clearly hear Robinson protesting about her own classification as a Jacobin purely on the basis of her favourable reception of the Revolution in its very first stages and her exalted sentiments in favour of a generalised liberty. An understanding of this cannot but be of use in explaining why Robinson has been at such pains to stress her repugnance for Jacobinism and the Revolution, and why this, her final novel, for no immediately apparent reason transplants characters such as Julia and Martha, whose contrasting moral rôles had already been fully established in the British context, into a French Revolutionary setting which fragments the narrative without altering its central themes. Put simply, Robinson was explaining why it was only natural to endorse the Revolution in its early years, but was also protesting that this did not make her a Jacobin and was doing her best to avoid any such imputation in the future by displaying, in the most vivid colours she could manage, her new, unimpeachably anti-Jacobin understanding of what had happened in France.

[Edward Sayer], *Lindor and Adelaïde, a Moral Tale. In which are exhibited the Effects of the Late French Revolution on the Peasantry of France.... By the Author of 'Observations on Doctor Price's Revolution Sermon'*. 1 vol., John Hockdale, London, 1791

J. M. S. Tompkins has declared *Lindor and Adelaïde* the first anti-revolutionary novel (*Popular Novel in England*, p.300), and certainly no anti-Jacobin novels were published before 1791. Sayer's text was influential, but also rather primitive. The first thing one notices about it is that its title seems to be split into two competing parts. It would be difficult to think of two more novelistic names for a hero and heroine than Lindor and Adelaïde, and yet, as the title-page also intimates, the reader should be prepared for large tracts filled with closely reasoned political monologues inserted on the flimsiest of pretexts. There may be a touch of remorse evident in some places - 'to ordinary minds, such a disquisition as that which fills the vacancy of this tedious volume, might, indeed, require an apology, but to a mind experienced and reflecting as yours is, the picture of a government and nation exceeding both the detail of history and the theory of imagination, however unskilfully drawn, will still be acceptable' (76) - but this cannot hide the fact that about one third of the 'novel' is taken up by non-fictional and rather dreary anti-Jacobinism. One particular passage on the nature of French and British government (prefaced by the ominous words 'Prepare yourselves therefore for a discourse of some length, and of some nicety, but I trust not unworthy of your attention, nor impossible to understand') is, at 86 pages, far longer than Sayer's *Observations on Doctor Price's Revolution Sermon* itself (92-178). But Sayer nevertheless felt it important that his message was couched in this fictional form, and clearly hoped that his novel would achieve something that his political pamphlet could not. 'Let example speak what precept would fail to enforce,' he says at the close of the novel, 'and may the misfortunes of this helpless pair prevent the misfortunes of others' (354).

The narrative of *Lindor and Adelaïde* is set quite specifically in August 1790 in Ermonville, an idyllic village near Grenoble, near which, we are informed with a topographical exactness designed to reveal immediately Sayer's understanding of the proper order of things, 'was seen the mansion of the Seigneur elevated above the rest of the village upon a rising eminence' with 'an alley of tall goodly trees, which led the passenger on in solemn regularity up to the gates of this old and venerable mansion' (2-3). This is the *ancien régime* as it ought to be, sanctioned by the wisdom of the ages as well as by the continuing practical utility of the arrangement, for under the benevolent supervision of the noble d'Antin family, the 'peasant paid the easy and honourable tribute of respect with willingness, nay with zeal, while he received in return, the solid advantages of security and peace' and all lived in ease and affluence (4). What the rest of the novel proceeds to depict, and in very stark terms too, is the overthrow of this perfect order by the Revolution and its uncomprehending and vicious agents, and the ruin of the village and all the felicity that it once contained.

In fact, as well as dramatising the levelling threat to an existing order that he clearly espoused, Sayer acknowledged that the seeds of their own ruin were sown by the aristocrats of France, and in this respect he was perhaps more typical of the early British response to the Revolution than his obvious and admitted mentor, Burke, whose too ardent eulogies of the *ancien régime* were the principal object of scorn to those who read his *Reflections on the Revolution* (1790). It is the corruption of the Marquise's family, conventionally figured as over-refined 'dissipation', that has forced the d'Antins to sell their home to a Parisian banker, Monsieur Levilles, a name so transparent that it requires no gloss. And just as these bourgeois levellers replace the aristocrats, so the villagers quickly descend into their own concomitant iniquities, metamorphosing from happy peasants into a rampaging mob. Deprived of their link with the past (once the mansion falls into ruin, the villagers, as if somehow supernaturally in sympathy with it, forget their customs and duties), they constitute themselves into a Revolutionary assembly around the cadre of the Levilles and their agents, embarking on a campaign of iconoclasm, with what we should read as Cromwellian vigour, devastating the church and proposing edicts to the effect that everything that had 'passed in France for the last five hundred years should be consigned to eternal oblivion' (264).

Against this backdrop of Revolution the story of our hero and heroine plays itself out. Lindor had been the son of one of the Levilles' agents, but has been converted into an active loyalism by the wise words of Adelaïde's elderly guardian, the Prieur, and, chiefly, by the thought that if no alters remain unbroken, he will not be able to marry Adelaïde. His is a doomed love in any case, though, for having been unable to resist speaking of the virtues of aristocracy and clergy at one of the villagers' assemblies, Lindor is chased through the village by the mob, overtaken, and killed, the names of his lover, his king



and his God all apparently on his lips as he dies. Adelaïde lasts very little longer. She is tormented by one of the mob, who attempts rape once his efforts to convince her into his libertine principles fail, and she dies upon hearing of Lindor's death and the mob's attack on the chateau, the melancholy event with which the novel concludes.

Above all, *Lindor and Adelaïde* broke new ground in recruiting the Revolution itself into both its argument and its narrative, setting a precedent for much subsequent anti-Jacobin fiction. At points, because Sayer sticks so closely to the patterns of life in a French village which he continually distinguishes from life in Britain, the reader can feel that the novel is more a warning to the French of the dangers of revolution, or that he is pushing British readers to recognise, but only in general and distanced terms, the consequences of dissipation, ambition, of a disregard for the wisdom of the ages. But the Prieur's peroration banishes such thoughts and renders Sayer's intentions clear. What we have read of here, Sayer insists, if it is not immediately resisted, will spread throughout the world, will physically affect everyone, even Britons such as the visitor he ushers into the action at the end of the novel to represent his readers. As the Prieur powerfully puts it, emphasising that there will be no class of people and no nation that can ever be safe, and enlisting what would become one of the most recurrent of metaphors of revolution,

This deluge of reformation, revolution, and confusion, rises higher and higher; it will first reach the cottages, then mount the castles, ascend the palaces, and at last overtop the mountains, till it ends in one wide waste of uniform devastation; a prospect without bounds, a surface without extremity, a sea without a shore (356).

Let your countrymen ponder the events of this story well, the Prieur continues to his visitor, so that 'from a sense of our misfortunes,' they may 'learn to place a just value on their own happiness' (358). Clearly, this was a message targeted specifically at those in Britain who had, it seemed, begun to question, to doubt, and to assail, the pillars of British society and government, the radicals who were meeting, corresponding and publishing to an unprecedented degree in 1791, those who, in other words, did not place a just value on their civil and social happiness. But it was also a more general plea for comparison with France, for the French experience to be treated as relevant, as very urgently relevant, to Britain, and a call for the vigilance and wariness that must come from that comparison.

### Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*. A Novel. 3 vols., J. & J. Robinson, London, 1792<sup>38</sup>

Unquestionably, *Desmond* was a novel wholly in favour of the Revolution as Smith understood it at the time of going to press, and as such it remains highly unusual, not even the so-called 'Jacobin' novels of Holcroft, Bage and Godwin coming out quite so strongly in favour of the actual events of 1789-92. Why it is of interest to the student of the conservative response to the Revolution is because between this novel's publication in 1792, and that of her *The Banished Man* in 1794, Smith's opinions went through an entire revolution of their own, and in exactly the places and ways in which *Desmond* had praised the French experiment, *The Banished Man* condemned it. When these two novels, as well as the two 'neutral' novels she produced in the pivotal year of 1793 (in both of which she determinedly withdrew from the

<sup>38</sup> An extensive body of material has now accumulated on Charlotte Smith's fiction in general. The principal sources remain Florence M. A. Hilbish's critical biography, *Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist* (Philadelphia, 1941), and references scattered in Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel* as well as more specific consideration in James R. Foster, 'Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist', *PMLA*, 43 (1928), 463-75, and, briefly, in W. L. Renwick, *The Rise of the Romantics*, pp.67-70. Much other material on Smith may be located via H. George Hahn and Carl Behm III, *The Eighteenth-Century British Novel and its Backgrounds: an Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Topics* (Methuen, New Jersey, 1985), but other particularly notable, and more recent studies, include Joseph F. Bartolomeo, 'Subversion of Romance in *The Old Manor House*', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 33 (1993), 645-57; Lucinda Cole, '(Anti-)Feminist Sympathies: The Politics of Relationship in Smith, Wollstonecraft, and More', *E.L.H.*, 58 (1991), 107-40; Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility* (London, 1993), especially pp.160-84; Joan Lucille Piorkowski, '"Revolutionary" Sentiment: A Reappraisal of the Fiction of Robert Bage, Charlotte Smith and Thomas Holcroft', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1980; Judith Stanton Phillips, 'Charlotte Smith's "Literary Business": Income, Patronage and Indigence', *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*, 1 (1987), 375-405; Eleanor Ty, *Unsex'd Revolutionaries. Five Women Novelists of the 1790s* (Toronto, 1993), pp.115-54; Alan Douglas McKillop, 'Charlotte Smith's Letters', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 15 (1951), 237-55; and Sarah Zimmerman, 'Charlotte Smith's Letters and the Practice of Self-Presentation', *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 53 (1991), 50-77.



arena of contemporary politics) are mapped on to a chart of the historical events of the early '90s, Smith's career begins to seem a perfect mirror of contemporary attitudes and the reasons for their creation, especially since Smith, the professional novelist of the '90s *par excellence*, was an author who was evidently continually mindful of her market. When we see, for instance, that whilst *Desmond* had delighted in showing how safe it was for a Briton to journey around Revolutionary France, *The Banished Man* explained how dangerous it was; or when we see that while *Desmond* had been full of depreciating references to Burke's *Reflections*, abusing and mocking its author for his ridiculous slanders and prophecies, *The Banished Man*, and also her novel of 1796, *Marchmont*, were respectful of Burke's every sentiment, even to the point of endorsing what were very identifiably his opinions and, sometimes very conspicuously, drawing on his imagery; then we can clearly identify through these discrepancies some of the principal factors behind the growth of anti-Jacobinism. The Revolution was, by 1794, indiscriminate in its attacks on people and property; Burke had been proved right; and as a result both Smith, and the constituency to which she belonged, and for whom she wrote, had renounced their initial ambivalence or indulgence towards the Revolution, and enlisted in the anti-Jacobin cause.

The rather temporary nature of Smith's radicalism should also be emphasised because of her reputation, in the 1790s and today, as an author operating 'on the fringe of the revolutionary circle' and 'liberal in her sympathies', if not actually an out-and-out Jacobin herself.<sup>39</sup> One should be wary, in other words, of holding up Smith's work, even *Desmond*, as a prime example of revolutionary, and particularly feminist revolutionary, fiction, as has recently been frequently the case.<sup>40</sup>

**Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House*. 4 vols., Joseph Bell, London, 1793 and *The Wanderings of Warwick*. 1 vol, Joseph Bell, London, 1794**

The sabbatical year that Smith took off from overtly political novels between *Desmond* and *The Banished Man*, when *The Old Manor House* and its sequel, *The Wanderings of Warwick*, were published, only serves to emphasise the transformation in political opinions, as if, with these novels set at the era of the American War of Independence, she had deliberately, but temporarily, withdrawn from the contemporary to consider unfolding events and her response to them. *The Old Manor House* might be said to exhibit a mid-way stop on what seems the smooth transition between the pro-Revolutionary *Desmond* and the anti-Jacobin *Banished Man*. The modulation is quietly chronicled in the novel, a footnote, for example, revealing that Smith was greatly distressed by the course the Revolution was taking - she cites 'the events of the past Summer (events terrible enough God knows!)' - whilst it also demonstrates that her former faith has not quite been annihilated, for she insists that all important historical processes, even those in which Britain has been involved (such as the war against the Colonies), will necessarily be accompanied by cruelty which will 'exceed any thing that happened on the 10th of August, the 2d September, or at any one period of the execrated Revolution in France' (1989 edn.: 360n).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, p.301n and Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries. English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* [Oxford, 1981], p.94. See also Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p.31, Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, p.29, and B. G. MacCarthy, *The Female Pen. Women Writers and Novelists* [1944 and 1947; Cork, 1994], pp.392-94 and 422-23.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Diana Bowstead, 'Charlotte Smith's *Desmond*. The Epistolary Novel as Ideological Argument' in Schofield and Macheski (eds.), *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815* [Athens, Ohio, 1987], pp.237-63, Stephen Prickett, *England and the French Revolution* [Basingstoke, 1989], pp.82-87, Spender, *Mothers of the Novel*, pp.224-26, and Eleanor Ty, *Unsex'd Revolutionaries*, pp.130-142.

<sup>41</sup> For the reasons behind Smith's abbreviation of her sequel to *The Old Manor House* into just one volume, see Caroline Franklin's 'Introduction' to *The Wanderings of Warwick* [London, 1982].

The retraction of support for the French Revolution embodied in *The Banished Man* may not have been quite so graceful as those of Coleridge, Wordsworth or Blake, say, men never renowned for their conventionality, all of whom recanted, to varying degrees in the second half of the '90s, but it was certainly candid and probably much more representative of the overall British response to the Revolution as it has generally been understood by historians. Her preface contrasts the hopes Smith had for the Revolution with the horror into which it has descended, and by doing so she illuminates not only her past and present understanding of the Revolution but also that she had arrived at those conclusions as a result of *events* in France, and not due to any personal ideological shift nor to the propaganda of anti-Jacobinism:

'When a man own himself to have been in error,' says Pope, 'he does but tell you that he is wiser than he was.' Thus, if I had been convinced I was in an error in regard to what I formerly wrote on the politics of France, I should without hesitation avow it. I still think, however, that no native of England could help *then* rejoicing at the possibility there was that the French nation would obtain, with very little bloodshed, that degree of freedom which we have been taught to value so highly (I, x-xi).

Smith set her novel in France and Britain in the period from October 1792 to early 1793, the crucial months in which the monarchy was abolished and then Louis XVI executed, in which the September Massacre took place and the series of short-lived dictatorships that would characterise the Terror began (although she uses a little artistic license to compress events here), and in which the French victories against the Austrians and Prussians at Valmy and Jermappes (September and November 1792) turned what could previously have been regarded as an experiment in domestic politics, probably doomed to be terminated by the autocratic European powers, into a military threat, most immediately to the Low Countries (and British commercial interests there), but then to the rest of Europe and, after February 1793, to Britain's own national security too.

Much of this Smith shows us, conducting her protagonists on a tour of Central Europe and Revolutionary France before allowing them to settle happily in Britain. The French Republic, we find, is governed by 'unprincipled leaders, who asserted, that they founded their power on the voice of the people' and when D'Alonville is arrested, his captors incessantly menace him with the guillotine (IV, 8; III, 154-68). Even more striking is Smith's decision to set the opening of her novel in the aftermath of the French military victories, the opening action being played out against the retreat of the Austrians and Prussians. The first chapters contain D'Alonville's description of the recent battle - which we understand as a loose representation of Valmy and Jermappes - and of the disorganised but blood-thirsty French soldiers, and the anxious fears of the local peasantry about the impending atrocities that will doubtless be committed by the advancing French forces. Viewed against the genuine historical background of the recent 'Belgian' uprising against Habsburg rule, which Dumouriez, the French general, had confidently expected would be repeated in support of the Revolutionary army, the Belgians peasants' fear and hatred of the invading French which Smith carefully and emotively details, as well as the love they evidently bear towards the Austrian-based Rosenheim family, our protagonists at this point, is significant. Smith, in fact, has systematically deprived the Revolution and its military campaign of all its props, taking away this last vestige of respectability it might claim as a campaign of liberation. And certainly this condemnation of the French by the Belgians (in Smith's fiction), who we see rushing for safety to the Rosenheim castle, ties in well with the more broadly anti-Revolutionary and anti-Jacobin points with which Smith follows up her pseudo-historical portrayal of the French advance. 'Folks may say what they will,' insists one of these peasants, a woman whose village has been ransacked and destroyed by the French, whose husband has been forcibly conscripted into driving the army's wagons, and who has been left to flee to the castle with her sick child, 'folks may say what they will of all people being on a footing; but I am sure one such good house as our castle above was, is a thousand times better for the poor than all these new notions that have brought us no good yet' (I, 30-53, 150).

All this seems marvellously well designed as propaganda, playing on the real fears of real readers in 1794, targeting the very things which they had been worried about. It may have been preaching to the converted, but it was preaching to the very recently converted and on the very subjects which had caused their conversions. Yet Smith's work lacks the overtly propagandistic purpose which can be found in many of the anti-Jacobin novels that would follow, and her 'conversion' may be viewed in another light, neither as a genuine, personal alteration in opinions which found its way into her fiction, nor merely as an

automatic and reflexive reflection of the prevalent British response to the unfolding Revolution, but rather as a combination of both - a deliberate ploy by the author to conform with, or even capitalise on, the changing public mood which she had identified. This is not necessarily to say that Smith was operating as a cynical exploiter of public opinion for mercenary ends, nor, contrariwise, that she was an unwilling slave of literary propriety. Yet it does seem likely that the change from *Desmond* to *The Banished Man* was effected at least partly by forces other than the pure well-spring of authorial volition.

**Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont: A Novel*. 4 vols., Sampson Low, London, 1796**

The sense that Smith was always conscious, after *Desmond*, of the need to take a politically orthodox line in her fiction is evidenced by her tendency overtly to include an often rather clumsy ideological rectitude into her novels, something which sits uneasily with her more familiar willingness to speak her mind. This is a particularly visible technique in *Marchmont*, a novel in which Smith steered well clear of politics, but stepped up her personal crusade against lawyers and the law (a campaign waged for biographical reasons).

Each time she lets loose her evidently heartfelt invective against the lawyers who persecute her hero and his family, Smith seems immediately to repent her rashness, as if she had suddenly become aware that such openly stated grievances might constitute an unpardonable lapse into what might be considered Jacobinism. They are the 'best possible laws' which are abused by her villains, she immediately adds, and her protagonists suffer from the 'abuse of the laws of the best governed of all possible communities', and the overall impression of *Marchmont* is of a novel which happily criticises the manners of many corrupt Britons whilst maintaining a stalwart faith in the theoretical perfection of Britain's institutions, and thus the danger of in any way emending them (II, 215; III, 29). The eventual rescue of the Marchmonts from debtors' gaol (again, this is Smith drawing on her own biography) by three separate agencies, each bestowing fortunes on Marchmont ample enough to end his incarceration and allow his long-precluded wedding, only serves to reinforce this theme of the fundamental, and providential, excellence of life in Britain.

**Charlotte Smith, *The Young Philosopher: A Novel*. 4 vols., Cadell & Davies, London, 1798**

On the face of it, *The Young Philosopher* is a radical novel in the tradition of *Desmond*, a recantation of the recantation in *The Banished Man*, optimistic about the Revolution in France and taking a band of what are clearly 'new philosophers' as its central characters. Its hero, Delmont, is quite literally another Desmond, were but two letters different, and when pressed on the subject of the Revolution he avows his opinion that it has succeeded insofar as 'the gloomy and absurd structures, raised on the basis of prejudice and superstition, have toppled down headlong', and that even if 'many are crushed in their fall; even some of those Samsons, who themselves shook the pillars' - a phrase displaying his full consciousness of the Terror - 'the bastilles of falsehood, in which men's minds were imprisoned, are levelled with the earth, never, never, to rise again!' (I, 147). Further support is given to this reading by Smith's partially resumed criticisms of Burke, whom she figures, much as she had in *Desmond*, as a cruel and bombastic charlatan, able to convince only the foolish (I, 181, 177).

Against this interpretation, though, is ranged Smith's own conception of her literary output which, as might be expected, sees none of this inconsistency. She encourages her readers to understand that in *Desmond* she had merely supported the first, moderate Revolution, in *The Banished Man* she had merely condemned its perversion, whilst in *The Young Philosopher* she was simply recognising its good and ill points with an impartial eye. All this is mediated to the reader through the opinions of the autobiographical Mr Armitage, a subsidiary character in the novel, who, she tells us, 'had been present at Paris at the taking of the Bastille, and had applauded the speech of Mirabeau in the Jeu-des-Paumes' - which *Desmond* had, in effect, done - but had also written a pamphlet exhorting the French 'not to suffer themselves to be led by the first effervescence of liberty, into such licentiousness as would risk the loss of it' - the very message of *The Banished Man* - and had 'hazarded a few opinions on the rights of nations, and the purposes of government,' which though 'modified by the nicest attention to the existing circumstances of his own country, and softened by a mildness and amenity of language,' were roundly



condemned by the critics - exactly as Smith expected the new philosophy of her *Young Philosopher* to be treated (I, 175-76).

Second, Smith protested that she had only given to her characters arguments which she had heard and that these did not necessarily accord with her own opinions (I, vi). Just as had been the case in *Desmond*, though, this was an unconvincing defence, for her preferences for certain characters and certain opinions were always apparent, and we find, for instance, that the vain and foolish Mrs Crewkherne condemns Armitage as 'a person whom I understand writes books - very bad books, I am afraid, from what some good friends of mine, and very good judges too, have told me', just as the conceited but small-minded Dr Winslow held them 'in the greatest abhorrence from report only, for he had never read a line in them' (I, 39-40, 143). More than anything else then, *The Young Philosopher* is a satire of the anti-Jacobin reaction, a campaign, Smith believed with good reason, had been launched against herself and many others, and which was absolutely unstinting in its crusade to expunge all traces of Jacobinism from British society and particularly its literature.

Indeed, the novel is filled with satirical attacks not on individual anti-Jacobins but, more interestingly, on the prevalence of an anti-Jacobin orthodoxy in polite society where it had become so entrenched, Smith suggests, that it was subscribed to without question, or understanding, by almost the entirety of the population. So it is that we find that Armitage is continually referred to as Delmont's 'jacobinical friend', though we have privileged knowledge that he does not deserve this title, and that Mr Glenmorris, another semi-autobiographical character, carries the burden of being thought 'a political writer of republican principles' throughout the novel, although we know him to be no such thing, whilst his wife, the innocuous Mrs Glenmorris, is accused by the officious Mrs Grinsted of bringing up her daughter, our heroine, in a despicably 'enlightened' style. Even Delmont himself is, quite wrongly, accused - and by his own brother - of new philosophical opinions on the irrelevancy of marriage and of supporting the 'Rights of man! - the people!' or some such 'eternal nonsense' (III, 106, 183, 170-79, 10-11, 138).

Smith locates the nub of her satirical attack, though, in an interview between Mr Armitage, representing the author, and Mrs Crewkherne, representing the anti-Jacobin reaction and the ill-informed and quick-to-judge self-appointed monitors who carried out its campaign. Crewkherne begins the debate by telling Armitage that 'she is assured' - for she cannot discern it for herself - that he is 'an atheist, a deist, a freethinker, an illuminy; ... a jacobin, and a republican.' As Armitage systematically disavows all these charges, Smith both exonerates herself from these accusations and anatomises the anti-Jacobin position, dissecting the Jacobin monster fabricated by its opponents and exposing the fallacies used to animate it. Can Armitage be both a deist and an atheist, he asks? Of course he cannot, and in any case, he is happy to admit that there must be a God. Should he be criticised for free-thinking, he goes on, when free-thinking means only the wish to contemplate any topic which might adduce to the happiness of the species? And as for the accusation that he, or anyone, is a member of the Illuminati, he would need to know exactly what that was before being able to reveal whether he is one or not, for he has 'read one nonsensical book on the subject, and tried to read another, but it was so childish and foolish', and he 'so little comprehended what the author means to establish', that its subject remains a mystery (IV, 5-12). When he presses Crewkherne on what exactly a 'democrate' and a 'jacobin' actually are, she is similarly unsure, but knows they are the same thing, that she wishes them all destroyed, and that each term 'includes every thing that you can imagine horrible' and represents 'a sort of a constellation of terrible charges' rolled into one. Even without Armitage's assurance that he does not hate governments, monarchs, nor nobles, that he thinks impracticable and absurd 'all the wild schemes of universal equality', and that he does not approve of the recent course of events in France, Mrs Crewkherne has done more than enough to ridicule her own position by her evident incomprehension of just what exactly it is that she detests.

Clearly, then, *The Young Philosopher* was no anti-Jacobin novel. It does, though, contain some manifestly conservative elements, such as the disgust Smith attempts to excite for Martha Goldthorpe because of her too active pursuit of Delmont, a chase which can only be meant to bring to mind the way in which Hays' heroine had pursued a husband in the Jacobin novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (also satirised in Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers*). And it is certainly not a Jacobin novel. Most appropriately it should be interpreted as testimony to the power of the anti-Jacobinism which had reached hegemonic proportions in Britain by 1798, and, incidentally, as an example of Smith's boldness in confronting the phalanx of assailants whom she regarded as her persecutors.



Louisa Sidney Stanhope, *Treachery; or, the Grave of Antoinette. A Romance.* 4 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1815

Even in the years after Waterloo Louisa Sidney Stanhope was producing fiction which, had it appeared fifteen or twenty years earlier, would have figured amongst the first rank of anti-Jacobin novels, and which still clearly evinces many of the principal features of anti-Jacobin literature. *Treachery*, for instance, in addition to its heroine's resonant name, presents a distinctly new philosophical character as its villain. 'Father St. Pierre was a scholar, was a philosopher; what was he not? Father St. Pierre was a Proteus, to suit his purpose'. This is a character familiar from many anti-Jacobin novels, of course, and we know that, just like the generation of new philosophical villains who had appeared before him, St. Pierre - a name with loud echoes of Rousseau in itself - would use this talent for the ruination of the innocent Antoinette (IV, 94-95).

Louisa Sidney Stanhope, *The Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro. A Tale.* 3 vols., Minerva Press, London, 1818

Three years after *Treachery* Stanhope produced a novel thoroughly immersed in the political and military context of the early Revolution. It dwelt on its horror and iniquity in such detail, indeed, that for a moment it seems as though the author must have deliberately dedicated all her energies to instructing a rising generation of novel-readers in recent, and none too disinterestedly objective, history. Such an impression, however, is immediately dispelled by a glance at the rest of the novels Stanhope had published by the strictly commerce-minded William Lane at the Minerva Press. Her other works were generally standard gothic fictions (of the 'sensation-Gothic' or 'terror-Gothic' schools, as Kelly puts it<sup>42</sup>), from *Montbrasil Abbey; or, Maternal Trials* in 1806, through *Di Montrazano; or, the Novice of Corpus Domini* (1810), to *The Crusaders. An Historical Romance, of the Twelfth Century* of 1820, and we realise that the French Revolution in *Santa Maria di Tindaro* acts merely as another thrilling setting for another tale of love and adventure.

Nevertheless, the novel provides an interesting insight into the way in which the French Revolution and its underpinning Jacobinism was understood in the years after Waterloo. What we find is that Louis XVI has been canonised, that the Revolution has been understood as having been manipulated throughout its course by private villains purely for their own ends, and that émigrées must necessarily be heroes and martyrs. This is not so different, of course, from the conceptualisation of the Revolution by the anti-Jacobins of the 1790s, but Stanhope takes it more for granted. For her protagonists it is enough that they denounce the Revolution for them to have their heroism established, or, contrariwise, that they express sympathy for it for them to be installed as villains who will inevitably also interfere with the felicity of our hero and heroine.

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<sup>42</sup> Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, p.59.

Surr, in so far as he is remembered at all, is now known best as the author of several influential novels of the incipient 'Silver Fork' school, yet his *George Barnwell* (1798) clearly deserves consideration as a major anti-Jacobin work with its two explicitly new philosophical villains - Miss Eleanor Milwood and her father Mr Mental. The novel is based on George Lillo's play, *The London Merchant*, produced in 1731 but recently revived with Kemble and Siddons in the lead rôles, and it is in the way in which Surr modified the play that may be seen the transition from the new philosopher as self-deceived fool to the new philosopher as designing villain.

First, Surr simply introduced a new character, absent from the play, as a new philosopher - Mr Mental. Though he starts the novel as a miscreant, indoctrinating George into what are explicitly Godwinian opinions - 'Have you looked into the Political Justice?' - Mental ends it both repentant and having won a certain degree of sympathy from the reader who has learned of his fall into Jacobinism through a too-strict Calvinist upbringing, who has witnessed his persecution by the more unbearably self-righteous and unthinkingly conservative of his neighbours (who apparently believe he harbours bands of Illuminati in his house), and who has seen the destruction of his innocuous laboratory by an incensed church-and-king mob (automatically bringing Joseph Priestley to mind). Indeed, it seems likely that Surr modified his vision of Mental as his novel progressed, forgetting that he had introduced him as a Jacobin of the deepest dye in uncompromising terms: 'The irredeemable evils of society were his dearest topics, and the climax of his felicity was, by the abuse of the eloquence he possessed, to render discontent triumphant' (I, 33, 147-48, 31).

We also find that Mental is the father of Miss Milwood, who had featured in Lillo's tragedy, but who, as Surr's 'Advertisement' to his novel testifies, has been given greater prominence in the fiction and who now bears the brunt of Surr's anti-Jacobin attack. It is she, and not her father, who would typify the villains of the anti-Jacobin novels to come. Rather than being created, she has simply been converted from the play, in which she had, since 1731, been responsible for seducing George into the crimes that eventually precipitate his execution. It was a simple matter for Surr to add a Jacobin dimension to her lures, allowing her to condemn George's hopes of legitimising their relationship by calling the institution of matrimony a mere 'prejudice', and allowing her to persuade him into theft by reasoning out the arbitrary nature of private property. As a coquette (and larcenist) simply using new philosophy for her own purposes, then, the Jacobinism of Milwood is denied even the status of the most absurd moral or political philosophy. It was simply the mask of vice (II, 130, 136-37, 234-35; III, 204-205).

**Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel. Founded on the French Revolution*. 2 vols., P. Nettleton 'for the Authoress', Plymouth, n.d. but 1795?**

Certainly, one of the most ardent of the anti-Jacobin novels, and one of those most likely to have been considered by its author as an instrument of active anti-Jacobinism rather than an attempt to capitalise on

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<sup>43</sup> Surr's greatest success, with thirteen editions in eight years, was *A Winter in London; or, Sketches of Fashion* (1806), clearly a precursor of those novels of fashionable society collected and dissected by M. W. Rosa in *The Silver Fork School: Novels of Fashion Preceding 'Vanity Fair'* (New York, 1936). Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, pp.220-22, and Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, pp.160-84, comment on Surr's later novels, and the latter, along with Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, p.176, also briefly considers *George Barnwell* in the light of the Silver Fork novels. Jones concludes that Surr's *oeuvre* expounds 'what might be called a "progressive conservatism" and sound religious principle' (p.161). In fact, Surr's conservatism was both more vibrant and more narrowly formulated by its historical locus that this would suggest, especially in *George Barnwell* but also afterwards. Indeed, *A Winter in London* was so zealous in its conservatism that it went so far as to praise the poetry of Henry James Pye (III, 134), whilst Surr's next work, *The Magic of Wealth, an Antibank Novel* (1815), abounds in references to the evils of the French Revolution - 'one of the most fruitless and sanguinary convulsions, of anarchy and power, that ever stained the annals of this world' - and with hopes that London will never be similarly 'crimsoned with the blood of its own citizens' (quoted in Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, p.177). See also Allene Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel*, pp.158-59, for a discussion of the socio-economic conservatism and anti-philosophical stance of *The Magic of Wealth* (although she calls the author 'E. T. Sun'). A central character, Mr Oldways, takes delight in pointing out, in a style that would not be out of place in any of the most anti-Jacobin of novels of the 1790s, 'the mortifying lesson to the bigoted worshippers of any human theory or system afforded by the horrors of the French Revolution' (quoted in Gregory, *French Revolution and the English Novel*, p.158).

already existing conservative inclinations among its readers is *Adolphus de Biron* by the obscure Ann Thomas. Its didactic ambitions seem apparent both from internal and external evidence. Unusually, it was privately printed, which might be taken to suggest that Thomas was so anxious to produce her supremely loyalist novel that she went ahead without the backing of a London publisher. The list of subscribers who backed the novel is impressively full of establishment figures, many from the Royal Navy.

Moreover, Thomas misses no opportunity to get her effusions of loyalty, as one character calls his opinions, across to the reader. We are not more than two or three pages into the novel before we have been granted a eulogy of the British constitution, an unsolicited declaration of the unprecedented horrors to be witnessed in France, and a thorough paraphrasing of Burke's political philosophy. From thereon in, Thomas' protagonists are continually asking leave of their correspondents - for this is an epistolary novel - 'to consider the Causes which have concurred to bring France into her present Situation', or deciding to 'say a few words' to recommend the perfection of the British constitution or 'to remind' a French émigré 'from what you have escaped' (I, 2-5; II, 72-73). These 'reminders' are uncompromising. The French, says one character, apropos of nothing in particular,

have gone from one Degree of Guilt to a greater, until they have nearly reached the very Summit of Wickedness. They have inflicted worse than Death on their lawful Sovereign by continually massacring the most faithful of his Subjects, not sparing (Cowards as they are) either Sex or Age; subjecting the King and his Family to every Insult and Indignity, and holding them Captives under the despotic Power of Wretches, who were lost to every Sense of Honour and Humanity (II, 37).

And just as often as she summons up appalling pictures of French atrocities - which is very often - Thomas tells us of the perfections of Britain, its paragon of a constitution, its orderly and fertile countryside, and even its magnificent and elegant capital city. So it is that just as not a single character finishes a letter without commiserating with their correspondent about the latest turn of events in France, the most unlikely of figures are pressed into service to congratulate Britons on the perfection of their nation - from a jolly Jack Tar to a visiting American Indian chief. Only Tom Paine exists to threaten this idyll, but although his spectre can haunt a significant portion of the novel, his self-evidently idiotic opinions are quickly and easily dispatched by the cold light of our protagonists' reason (II, 115-19, 101-103, 66-82).

What makes Thomas' novel importantly pivotal, however, is the unease she evidently feels about her decision to unite the novel form, with all its usual array of lovers, their tribulations and sudden éclaircissements, with a political polemic. In her preface she had penned an 'Apology ... for the political part of the Novel' (as if it formed only a minor part of the work!), which she justified as an expression of her gratitude for the protection afforded by the British Constitution, but this was fairly conventional and sits comfortably with the very traditional (and eminently sensible) attempt to appease the critics by telling them with what deference and respect she always heard their opinions. What is much more striking is the way in which her characters are always apologising for consigning their political convictions to their letters. Notably, but not only, the female correspondents seem shy of talking of politics ('I do not think proper to deliver my Opinions in Public', says one) and in general they confine their letters to matters within the realm of the private sphere, this question of gender propriety going some way, of course, to explaining the reticence of Thomas herself (I, iv-v; II, 76).

The plot of *Adolphus de Biron* is simple. Adolphus, a noble Frenchman forced to emigrate because of the Revolution, loves Adelaide but has a friendly rival for her affections in Augustus. Meanwhile, Alexander, a Scottish friend of Adolphus, loves Sophie, but cannot admit his passion because he is engaged to the increasingly repellant Miss MacIntosh. When Augustus marries Adelaide's sister, the not immaterially named Antoinette, Adolphus can settle in Britain and wed Adelaide. When Miss MacIntosh secretly marries, Alexander can marry Sophie. But Thomas infuses this with an all-pervasive anti-Jacobinism. For example, the qualifications which fit the protagonists for their rôles are essentially ideological. No longer do they have to be heroic in the traditional sense, but they absolutely must display a political probity. Adolphus and Alexander are expected to earn our approval not because of any valorous deeds they perform, for they lead rather dull lives and generally leave the rescuing of heroines to their servants (so that Thomas may demonstrate the mutually beneficial interaction of different ranks), but by their anti-Jacobin rectitude. When they extemporise poetry, say, as any novel-reader must know heroes were wont to do, they do so on the theme of the iniquity of France and the perfection of Britain, and by the close of the novel it is made absolutely transparent that they owe their eventual felicity to their

opinions. 'Thank Heaven he is loyal,' says the father of Sophie, 'or I could not accept him as a Relation, nor hardly as an Acquaintance!' And when, to take a further example, another character exhibits his exquisite sensibility in the traditional manner - 'You see the Paper blotted with my Tears' - it is not for some personal pain endured, some lover's death or melancholy scene encountered, but for a much more public bereavement: the death of Louis XVI (I, 155, 234-45; II, 177, 187). Thomas led the way in this fusion of anti-Jacobinism and the conventional mechanisms of the novel.

**George Walker, *Theodore Cyphon, or, the Benevolent Jew. A Novel.* 3 vols., John Rice, Dublin, 1796**

Astonishingly in view of his later militant conservatism, *Theodore Cyphon* bears much resemblance to Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), although Walker does not quite evince the same hopelessness as is apparent in Godwin's critique of contemporary society. Indeed, his principal characters testify to the consolatory properties of religion, Shechem, the Benevolent Jew, for instance, lambasting some 'self-styled philosophers' (whom one of Walker's footnotes identifies as 'some modern reformers who talk of liberty') who have sought to destroy the excellent institution of church-going on the Sabbath (1823 edn.: III, 209 and n.). Nevertheless, the overall tenor of the novel is rather radical, and the difference between this novel and *The Vagabond* of only three years later seems to point to the ability of Walker - a London bookseller - to adapt his work to what he considered to be prevailing fashion, rather than to any genuine revolution in his political opinions.

**George Walker, *The Vagabond, a Novel.* 2 vols., G. Walker and Hurst, London, 1799 [3rd edn., 'with notes', 1799]<sup>44</sup>**

*The Vagabond* is perhaps the most complete of the anti-Jacobin novels, although it is not without its inconsistencies, again suggesting that Walker was less an ideologue using fiction to further a thought-through anti-Jacobinism, than an author who had taken up anti-Jacobinism for what it could offer his fiction. His heroine Laura, for instance, is meant to be read as another Julie or Sophie, straight out of the Rousseauian tradition, as someone whose natural good sense informs her that modesty, complacency and softness are the chief requisites of a good woman, and yet Walker makes continual attacks on Rousseau, a paradox that MacMullen has analysed in some depth. Furthermore Laura so forthrightly and cogently argues her case against her father, Dr Alogos, and his new philosophical friends (so that they inadvertently reveal their hypocrisy and the lust which in large part motivates it, telling her that women cannot understand their sophisticated arguments whilst they also postulate certain Wollstonecraftian doctrines about education being all that separates the sexes, and even attempting rape when her reasoning demolishes their theories: I, 21-43), that she brings into question her fulfilment of that most important of qualifications for a conservative heroine, her filial duty.

What Laura also has to resist is the natural, that is to say conventional, logic of the plot, which early in the novel introduces her to Frederick Fenton, Walker's protagonist and a likely enough hero were it not for the fact that he too is a new philosopher - and one who, in impressive contrast to the forbearance of Laura, is impelled by his new philosophy to kill his own mother, albeit by accident, when he robs a stagecoach. Despite this, or rather because Walker concentrates on Frederick's narrative, and reveals all his internal musings, Walker evidently wished the reader to identify with his anti-hero, and therefore to feel all the more the frustration arising from the derailment of a traditional and satisfying plot which inevitably results from Frederick's increasingly vicious radicalism and Laura's rising antipathy towards him. In fact, Walker does relent and provides a love-plot and a marriage, but he does not go quite so far

<sup>44</sup> The novel went through four editions within two years. Two brief studies of *The Vagabond*, as with no other major anti-Jacobin novel, have been attempted: Hugh H. MacMullen, 'The Satire of Walker's *Vagabond* on Rousseau and Godwin', *PMLA*, 52 (1937), 215-29, and A.D. Harvey, 'George Walker and the Anti-Revolutionary Novel', which concerns itself primarily with Walker's satirical techniques. See also Gregory, *French Revolution and the English Novel*, pp.136-44, who provides a summary of the novel's plot and major themes, and brief treatments in Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.324-25 and Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, pp.107-108 and 110-12.



as to have Frederick suddenly reform just in time to win Laura's heart. Rather, in a nicely symmetrical, as well as edifying, dénouement, Walker dredges up Vernon, a long-lost character from the first volume, to wed Laura, paying back Frederick for seducing his first sweetheart with his new philosophical casuistry. Vernon returns just in time to rescue Laura from a fate worse than death at the hands of a tribe of American Indians, into whose hands she has fallen - for nothing in this novel happens without an anti-Jacobin moral - as a result of the ridiculous pantisocratic ideas of her father and his associates.

This pantisocratic episode forms the last section of this eventful novel. Stupeo, Alogos, Laura and Frederick had repaired to America in the hope of establishing a community based upon their enlightened principles. The plan fails. They find Kentucky to be barren, and riddled with as many swindlers as rattlesnakes, and they contribute to their own downfall by appropriating each others' partners and hypocritically purchasing slaves. Searching for Laura, after she has been kidnapped by the Miama Indians, they are disabused first of their ideas of the perfection of native savagery, for they come to see the Amerindians as thieving, incestuous and barbarous, and then of their remaining faith in new philosophy, for they happen upon a 'Perfect Republic on the Principles of Equality and Political Justice', an horrendous dystopia where Godwinian axioms have been applied in all their folly and cruelty (Walker is quite candid about his methods: 'It is astonishing', he writes, 'how ridiculous and even irrational the new doctrines appear, when taken from the page of metaphysics, and contrasted with practice': II, 187n.). This is enough to jolt Frederick and Alogos out of their foolishness, but their tribulations are not quite over for Walker wishes to provide one last lesson. Though it is the American Indians who capture the party, and prepare to burn them at the stake, it is revolution in general that Walker wished to exhibit in all its horror, and he forces us to understand the Indian village as the exact counterpart of Revolutionary Paris. 'The learned may infer', a footnote prompts us, 'that savages are much alike, all over the world', a realisation that brings Frederick finally to acknowledge that, mankind being what it is, 'coercion and laws are necessary to restrain the arm of destruction and violence' and that 'half our miseries we bring on ourselves, by endeavouring to raise human nature superior to itself.' When Vernon suddenly appears to rescue Frederick and Alogos along with Laura - but not Stupeo who has, unrepentant, already been burned - they are wiser men whose experiences in America have transformed their whole value system, not merely in politics, but, as a necessary corollary, in the whole panoply of their opinions. Thus, as they freely admit, are they not only 'tired with philosophy' and contemptuous of politics, but they also understand that no social equality can ever exist and, for the first time, appreciate that the 'tender smile of a modest woman, has more real pleasure than the most wanton blandishments of promiscuous intercourse' (II, 263-264, 270-72).

[Jane West], *A Gossip's Story, and a Legendary Tale. By the Author of Advantages of Education. 2 vols.*, T. N. Longman, London, 1796<sup>45</sup>

West was consistently eulogised as the most accomplished and correct of conservative writers. The *British Critic*, for instance, that most circumspect and vigilant of literary organs, seemed to conduct its own campaign of veneration. In 1799 it was congratulating West on useful sentiments and good style and on a new critical criterion too, for the editor was apparently 'assured that, though she writes so much, her domestic duties suffer no kind of neglect.' By 1803, it was using another novel to justify its innovative opinion that 'a good novel ranks, in our opinion, very honourably among the productions of Genius', and within a few years its reviewers were judging other novels as 'worthy of a West' or as fit to be placed alongside the works of the greats: Burney, Radcliffe - and West. Charlotte Smith, for one, corroborates this high opinion, citing West as the favourite novelist of the day and giving her own opinion that she was 'a woman of talents' before adding, somewhat implausibly, that she could not approve of West's manifest conservatism, the very quality, of course, which had prompted the *British Critic* to its panegyrics.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Some attention is paid to the work of West in Tompkins, *Popular Novel in England*, pp.99 and 320 & n. and Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, pp.60 and 319-20, but a much more sustained treatment may be found Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, pp.96-105, who summarises the plots of the early novels in some detail as well as considering the nature and location of the interface between her broadly moral, and narrowly political, conservatism.

<sup>46</sup> *British Critic*, 13 ('Preface' to January-June, 1799), xvi; 24 ('Preface' to January-June, 1803), xv; 24 (1804), 318; and 34 (1809), 74. Smith to Rev. Joseph Cooper Walker, 23 June 1799 and 14 April 1801, quoted in McKillop, 'Charlotte Smith's Letters', p.254.

But if West's novels were indeed written 'to please particular people or parties', as Smith had put it, meaning, of course, the anti-Jacobin lobby, then in her work, more than with any other novelist's, we get the sense that the political alignment was born purely of her own volition and that it cannot be considered a ploy designed to propitiate any other persons or persuasion. She is, after all, nothing if not explicit about the ends and the means of her fiction. Her second novel, *A Gossip's Story*, starts off with the heroic proclamation that it is intended 'under the disguise of an artless History' (not much of a disguise, then, since West has blown it in her first sentence) to illustrate the advantages of, amongst other things, 'FORTITUDE, and the DOMESTIC VIRTUES' and to ridicule 'CAPRICE' and 'AFFECTED SENSIBILITY' (1798 edn.: I, v). This may seem not quite anti-Jacobinical, but merely moral in a non-political sense, but West quickly advances her literary manifesto within the first few chapters of *A Gossip's Story*, skilfully uniting her attack on modern manners, which she contends are dissipated and over-refined, with a definably Burkean regard for the wisdom of the ages. 'I am persuaded', says Prudentia Homespun, West's narrator in this and later novels,

that the imaginary duties which the extreme of modern refinement prescribes, are never practised but at the expense of those solid virtues, whose superior excellence has stood the test of ages. I conceive that the rules prescribed to us as social and accountable beings, are fully sufficient (I, 48).

The test of ages, prescription - these are the very phrases of Burke, and endow West's moralising with a distinctly political edge. And it was this side of her work which she would prove keenest to substantiate in her later novels.

[Jane West], *A Tale of the Times; By the author of A Gossip's Story*. 3 vols., Longman & Rees, London, 1799

By 1799 West was announcing her intention to resume her pen in order to attack not the over-refinements of sensibility or fashion, but very specifically 'the wiles of systematic depravity', that is to say, 'the labours of the "New philosophy"'. Indeed, so clear was West's agenda that she evidently felt obliged to apologise in her preface to *A Tale of the Times* for the similarity of her work to Hamilton's *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and King's *Waldorf*. It is as a symptom of this politicisation that we find that West suddenly introduces a character to personify the threat to her heroines, adding to her fiction the (by 1799) conventional figure of a new philosopher, Fitzosbourne (and Mr Raymond to *The Infidel Father* and Major Monthault to *The Loyalists*), whilst in her earlier *Advantages of Education* (1793) and *Gossip's Story* West's protagonists had been their own worst enemies, their vanity or imprudence steering them into the deservedly wretched fates which awaited them (I, 5-6, 3 and 'Advertisement').

Though West's principal purpose remains the attack on British corruption, the novel's narrative even allows for a assured attack on the Revolution in France. Geraldine marries Sir James MacDonald and they live happily until Fitzosbourne, the dedicated and distinctly new philosophical villain, aims at her ruin. He plays her and her husband against one another, exciting the jealousy of each, and then abducts her under false pretences causing a final rift in the marriage. Both husband and wife die repentant, but Fitzosbourne finds himself in France amidst Robespierre's Revolution. His penitent death in a French gaol, as well as exhibiting the Revolution to the reader's horrified gaze, is meant to symbolise the inevitable end of the sort of immorality of which Fitzosbourne has been guilty of peddling in Britain, and thus West succeeds in establishing a link between her primary moral agenda and more mainstream, anti-Revolutionary conservatism.

[Jane West], *The Infidel Father; By the author of A Tale of the Times, A Gossip's Story, &c.* 3 vols., Longman & Rees, London, 1802

As West's novel-writing career progressed she became more adept at integrating her moral purpose into exciting fiction. In *The Infidel Father* it was, for the first time, character and plot which carried the burden of her didacticism, and very successfully so.

Lord Glanville, the infidel of the title, has, unbeknownst to him, a granddaughter, Sophia, who has been raised in obscurity by the wise Mr Brudenell, the worthy gentleman whom West entrusts with most of her moral lessons. Meanwhile, Lord Glanville's daughter by his second marriage, Lady Caroline, has been educated by him into his 'infidelity', a compound sin composed of irreligion, vanity, a too ardent desire to be fashionable, but containing identifiably new philosophical elements. Caroline, for instance, is forever 'avowing her contempt of opinions, prejudices, customs, and laws', which we recognise immediately as the sort of crime for which Godwin, Wollstonecraft and the rest had been arraigned (II, 306). When she acts upon this false philosophy to elope with an opportunistic rogue, Mr Raymond, her father realises the great error he has made both in his own convictions and in his daughter's education, and he repents, but too late. When Caroline kills herself, having realised her mistake as well, Sophia is restored to the title and riches which have always been rightfully hers, not only by law, but by virtue of the piety, good sense and ideological rectitude which ought always to accompany rank. Her marriage to the virtuous, but dashing, Lord Selbourne rounds off the novel. If this was moral and political rectitude, then it was also as captivating a plot as any author might produce. West confided that her plan had 'ever been to seize on some important moral truth, and then to fabricate a story to illustrate it' (I, 7). In her earlier novels, this method had been creakingly obvious. By 1802 it was much less so.

**[Jane West], *The Loyalists: an Historical Novel. By the author of 'Letters to a Young Man', 'A Tale of the Times', &c.. 3 vols., Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, London, 1812***

Set in the English Civil War and its aftermath, *The Loyalists* is one extended allegory of the dangers faced by Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (and still, according to West, in 1812). As such, it is an anti-Jacobin novel in the tradition of Walker's Godwinian community in America in *The Vagabond* or in the Oriental dystopias of Wright's *Solyman and Fatima* or the anonymous *Massouf*, and though these novels were written as much as ten and twenty years previously, West was still addressing the same issues, using her seventeenth century setting to explain that levelling is iniquitous, for example, or that prescription, not abstract reasoning, ought to govern political behaviour. The reader is not told these things directly, but we see that it is so from West's Interregnum dystopia during which antinomian radicals, obeying no laws whatsoever, cause the collapse of their communities just as the credulous new philosophers had done in other less historically distant Other places. If this novel is different from West's earlier conservative fictions, it is only because, with its Kings and Lords Protector, its aristocrats and levellers, its heroes and heroines, all of whose private lives we see in much more detail than their public, the action never lapses and no dry didacticism is allowed to interfere with the chronicle of battles and love affairs, betrayals and suddenly revealed identities. In her later novels, and perhaps as financial considerations weighed more heavily, West had become, it seems, more aware of how necessity it was for excitement to be mingled with the didacticism which still pervaded her fiction.

**Joseph Wildman, *The Force of Prejudice, A Moral Tale. 2 vols., J. Barfield, London, 1799***

Wildman demonstrates a thorough familiarity with the standard features of the anti-Jacobin novel's attack on new philosophy. He even goes so far as to send his hero on a mission to expose 'the sophistical delusions of the enemies of [his] country', something which he sets about doing by publishing an acclaimed discourse decrying philosophy and championing religion. But Wildman lacks any real conviction, preferring to concentrate on unravelling the rather complex tangle of familial relations than pushing home his anti-Jacobin points. He also spends much of the novel dealing in some depth with subjects as diverse as the Regency Crisis, the American Revolution, Corsican independence, the evils of duelling and prostitution, and the dangers of Goethe and Methodism (II, 16; I, 66-68).

The plot takes in several generations of characters, Erasmus Inglebert senior marrying Georgiana Orlington towards the end of volume one (having overcome the 'force of prejudice' of her brother, who is opposed to the simple morality of Erasmus) and the rest of the novel following the career of their son, Erasmus junior, whom Lord Orlington wishes to see wedded to his legitimate daughter, but who loves,

and eventually marries, Adelaide Faulkner, illegitimate child of Lord Orlington but fostered by Erasmus senior and Georgiana. A sub-plot provides a whole other set of weddings too.

[Sarah Sayward Barrell Keating Wood], *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron. A Novel: Founded on Recent Facts, which have transpired in the course of the late Revolution of Moral Principles in France. By a Lady of Massachusetts*. 1 vol., Charles Peirce, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1800

Although an American work, Wood's novel clearly shared its inspiration, aims and methods, and possibly also its readers, with other anti-Jacobin novels, and there seems no reason not to consider it alongside its British counterparts. It perfectly exhibits the increasing obsolescence of Jacobin characters who were merely deluded by new philosophy and their replacement by designing villains who simply used Jacobinism as a mask for their own purposes.

In *Julia* 'vain philosophers' and 'Illuminata' abound, yet are shown to be entirely lacking in any political agenda, their sole reason for espousing Jacobinism, and the only purpose of their existence being, it would seem, to interfere with the innocent felicity of our protagonists as they seek to live what Wood apparently thinks would be the otherwise untroubled lives of French aristocrats in France in 1798. Wood's grasp of historical realities was shaky to say the least. As well as her title promising a novel set in the Revolution, one letter is dated 1798 (79), and she tells us that '[b]y this time convents in France were almost annihilated' (273). Yet Louis XIV is apparently still alive (116) and the Bastille is still very much to be feared (228). It is possible the letter dated 1798 is an error, but even if this is the case, events are very much telescoped together to give an overall sense of revolution simultaneously impending, occurring and over.

The chief of Wood's pseudo-Jacobins, the Count de Launa, is positively a mass of hypocritical contradictions:

he hated royalty, yet was sometimes so vain, as to aspire to the possession of a sceptre; he laughed at religion, and he trembled at its power and wished to possess it; he turned virtue into ridicule, while he had known it existed; and he adored honour, at the moment he sneered at its dictates... (68).

It is as if the beautiful Julia is the muse of de Launa's Jacobinism, his attempts to seduce her inspiring him to flights of new philosophical rhetoric, of which he does not believe a word, in the attempt to overcome her objections. Thus we hear him patiently explaining, in terms which by 1800 must surely have been familiar to most readers, that religion was nothing but 'a mere chimera' and chastity simply the 'fetters of prejudice' (103-105). Ultimately, of course, the Count dies and Julia and her lover, the Englishman Francis Colwort, having been revealed to be aristocrats, move to Britain to live in happiness. This leaves us unsure of whether the Illuminati, or Jacobinism in any of its forms, is actually left with any existence independent of the lust which had given it shape in the form of de Launa. While he was alive and Julia still within his grasp the form, purpose and activities of the Illuminati had been described in some detail. As the novel draws to a close, though, we are simply told that their operations are 'too shocking to be delineated' (104-105, 242-44, 288).

**T. Wright, *Solyman and Fatima; or, the Sceptic Convinced. An Eastern Tale*. 2 vols., John Bew, London, 1791**

*Solyman and Fatima* rivals Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaide* as the progenitor of the anti-Jacobin genre. If Sayer had produced a political tract squashed into the form of a novel, however, Wright's work was much more characteristic of what was to characterise the anti-Jacobin novel as it matured - traditional fictional structures into which, to a greater or lesser extent, conservative doctrine or values had been infused. What Wright offered to his or her readers was a straightforward parable which bore obvious reference to the Revolution crisis breaking in Britain in the early '90s but steered clear of any overt reference to it. It was a plan for which the Oriental Tale structure was perfectly adapted, as already been amply demonstrated by Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759).



In *Solyman and Fatima* we are introduced to Zadah, happy in his humble lot as a shepherd in peaceful Cassimere, a region, we are pointedly told, protected from the grasp of an ambitious power by a range of encircling mountains (for which we might read the English Channel). But Zadah's son, Solyman, is guilty of that most socially destructive of impulses, ambition, whilst Zadah's ward, Fatima, has a tendency to vanity that is equally perilous, as becomes obvious when the religious sceptic Selim suddenly appears to undermine all the old certainties in their lives and tempt Fatima to forsake her home. Selim, of course, may be read as a new philosopher and Jacobin as well as a seducer and sophist (although we should remember that in 1791, much of what would come to be known as 'new philosophy' had yet to be formulated), and if his tempting away of Fatima is conventional enough for a villain in a novel, it is his effect on Solyman which is emphasised as particularly relevant to Britain in 1791. Under Selim's influence, we discover that Solyman began to forget his father's wise lesson that 'the sphere of life allotted by Providence to every individual, is productive of pleasures adapted to the capacity, and affords the proper scope for the execution of moral duties', and Solyman soon leaves Cassimere, only ostensibly in pursuit of Fatima (I, 22).

Before we catch up with Solyman, however, Wright treats us to a lengthy biography of Selim, or Ibrahim as he is really called, describing his disillusionment with all religions and with society in all its forms and his rather pathetic fall into a wretched scepticism. This is followed by a drawn out and somewhat staged debate between him and Zadah - rather in the manner of Hannah More's *Village Politics* (published the following year) - as a result of which the sceptic is duly convinced, coming to understand the felicity to be found in humility and by placing one's trust in Providence. Solyman's conversion to his father's way of thinking, though, seems to require rather more practical proofs, and after various adventures, we are told of his discovery of a hugely valuable diamond which allows him to live the life of luxury of which he had always dreamed. Yet Solyman derives only misery from his new life as his inability to govern his household leads it into unmanageable chaos, and soon he freely gives up his spurious position and returns to Cassimere, providentially encountering Fatima on his way, discovering her to be the daughter of Ibrahim, and marrying her to live happily ever after in the company of both their fathers. Lest any reader still fail to appreciate the lesson to be drawn from the story, Wright even has an angel descend to disclose that 'the station assigned to each individual is that wherein his happiness is to be found, and ... that no condition is restricted from the enjoyment of those things, which conduce to the real benefit of human life' (II, 87-88).

What Wright does not do is make specific reference to the Revolution in France. *Solyman and Fatima* might just as well have been written either before or after the Fall of the Bastille or the abolition of nobility, its lesson against levelling apparently as essential in the 1770s or '80s as it was in the '90s. Indeed, since the virtually anonymous T. Wright leaves us no clues as to his or her particular reasons for taking up the pen, it might be suggested that we are not wholly within our rights to consider the work as an anti-Jacobin novel at all. To a certain extent, and barring any sudden discoveries of Wright's designs, this must stay an unanswered question, yet the fact remains that the novel was published in 1791, and therefore necessarily in a climate which could not fail but to have invested Wright's moral tale with a fresh urgency derived from the developing events in France and their apparent hearty welcome, and even emulation, by many in Britain, an urgency which must have affected the reader's reception even if not the author's production. This was an age when 'almost every alehouse had its artisans haranguing in favour of republicanism and equality', according to Godwin.<sup>47</sup> It was just this menace which *Solyman and Fatima* was so well devised to counter, however heavy-handedly.

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<sup>47</sup> William Godwin, *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr's Spital Sermon* (London, 1801), p.7.

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## 6: Unpublished dissertations

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